

汉 英  
成语词典

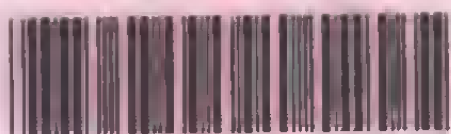
A CHINESE-ENGLISH  
DICTIONARY OF IDIOMS



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汉英成语词典



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## 汉英成语词典

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## 再 版 前 言

《汉英成语词典》是一本以翻译工作者、英语教师、学生和学习汉语的外国人士为主要服务对象的工具书,它可以弥补一般汉英词典的不足。

《汉英成语词典》共收录汉语常用成语四千余条,英译译例一万五千余条。各汉语词条均标有汉语拼音。译文力求准确精练,在修辞上尽量兼顾汉语成语的语法特点和英语语言色彩,直译意译兼备,同时还收集了大量与汉语成语意义相同或相近的英语成语和谚语。

本书原名《汉语成语英译手册》,曾由四川人民出版社于1979年出版在国内发行,后更名为《汉英成语手册》由三联书店香港分店于1981年出香港版在海外发行。该书问世以来颇受中外读者的欢迎。为进一步满足广大读者的需要,我们对该书作了修订并改名为《汉英成语词典》,由四川人民出版社再版发行。

在本书的编写和修订过程中我们得到了不少同行和专家学者以及四川人民出版社等有关单位的大力支持和帮助,谨此表示深切谢意。

由于我们水平有限,经验不足,缺点和错误在所难免,恳请广大读者和学术同仁不吝赐教。

编 者

1996年2月于成都



## 凡 例

一、本书可供英语翻译工作者、英语教学工作、高等院校英语专业的学生和具有中等英语水平的读者，以及学习汉语的外国朋友参考。

二、本书共收汉语成语四千余条。所收范围除一般成语外，近年来出现的一些类似成语或正在向成语发展的词组和群众常用的一些熟语也酌予收入。

三、本书词目按汉语拼音字母排列。成语中第一音节（即第一个汉字的注音）相同者，以声调的阴平、阳平、上声、去声为序。成语中第一音节相同且声调也相同者，按汉字笔画多少排列，笔画少者在前。成语中第一个汉字相同且声调也相同者，按第二字、第三字音序排列。

四、本书用汉语拼音字母分别给成语中单个汉字注音。注音参照《普通话异读词审音表》，如“哑然失笑”的“哑”字，注yǎ 不注è。成语中出现的“一”、“七”、“八”、“不”等字一律不变调，“一”均作yī，“七”均作qī，“八”均作bā，“不”均作bù。轻声一般标单字读音。

五、每条汉语成语附有一条或数条英文译文。一条数译则用斜线“/”隔开。译文的排列次序是：直译，意译，与汉语成语同义或近似的英语成语或谚语，与汉语成语同义的英语单词。

六、本书附有按汉语拼音排列的音序表和按笔画排列的条目索引。

## 音 序 表

| A   |  | 噉 6  | bang | ben  | bian |
|-----|--|------|------|------|------|
| ai  |  | B    | 傍 13 | 奔 17 | 鞭 22 |
| 哀 1 |  | ba   | bao  | 本 18 | 扁 22 |
| 挨 1 |  | 八 6  |      | 笨 18 | 变 22 |
| 唉 1 |  | 跋 6  | 包 13 | bi   | 便 23 |
| 爱 1 |  |      | 饱 13 |      | 遍 23 |
| 碍 2 |  | bai  | 报 13 | 逼 18 |      |
|     |  | 白 6  | 抱 14 | 比 19 | biao |
| an  |  | 百 7  | 豹 14 | 彼 19 |      |
| 安 2 |  | 败 11 | 暴 14 | 笔 19 | 标 23 |
| 按 4 |  | 裨 11 |      | 必 19 | 表 23 |
| 暗 5 |  |      | bei  | 闭 20 | bie  |
| 黯 5 |  | ban  | 杯 15 | 毕 21 |      |
|     |  | 班 11 | 卑 16 | 敝 21 | 别 24 |
| ang |  | 斑 11 | 悲 16 | 筭 21 |      |
| 昂 5 |  | 搬 11 | 背 17 | 避 21 | bin  |
|     |  | 版 12 | 悖 17 | 壁 22 | 宾 25 |
| oo  |  | 半 12 |      |      |      |

|   |      |      |    |       |    |       |    |       |    |
|---|------|------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|
| 彬 | 25   | 采    | 49 | 查     | 53 | 趁     | 56 | chong |    |
|   |      | can  |    | 茶     | 53 | 称     | 57 | 充     | 63 |
|   | bing | 残    | 49 | 察     | 53 | cheng |    | 冲     | 63 |
| 冰 | 25   | 蚕    | 49 | chai  |    | 称     | 57 | 重     | 63 |
| 兵 | 26   | 惨    | 50 | 豺     | 53 | 瞳     | 57 | 宠     | 64 |
| 并 | 27   | cang |    | chan  |    | 成     | 57 | chou  |    |
| 病 | 27   | 沧    | 50 | 馋     | 53 | 诚     | 58 | 抽     | 64 |
|   |      | 藏    | 51 | 谄     | 53 | 承     | 59 | 愁     | 64 |
|   | bo   | cao  |    | chang |    | 城     | 59 | 稠     | 64 |
| 波 | 27   | 操    | 51 | 长     | 53 | 乘     | 60 | 踌     | 64 |
| 拨 | 27   | 草    | 51 | 常     | 54 | 惩     | 60 | 丑     | 65 |
| 伯 | 28   | ce   |    | 畅     | 54 | 逞     | 60 | 臭     | 65 |
| 博 | 28   | 侧    | 52 | 唱     | 54 | chi   |    | chu   |    |
|   |      | cen  |    | chao  |    | 吃     | 60 | 出     | 65 |
|   | bu   | 参    | 52 | 超     | 54 | 痴     | 61 | 初     | 67 |
| 补 | 28   | ceng |    | che   |    | 嗤     | 61 | 除     | 68 |
| 捕 | 28   | 层    | 52 | 车     | 55 | 魑     | 61 | 锄     | 68 |
| 不 | 29   | 曾    | 52 | 彻     | 55 | 迟     | 61 | 处     | 68 |
| 步 | 48   | cha  |    | chen  |    | 持     | 62 | 触     | 69 |
|   | C    | 差    | 52 | 陈     | 56 | 跣     | 62 | chuan |    |
|   | cai  | 插    | 52 | 沉     | 56 | 叱     | 62 | 川     | 69 |
| 才 | 48   |      |    |       |    | 赤     | 62 | 穿     | 69 |

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| chuang | 聪 73 | dai  | 得 91 | ding  |
| 创 70   | 从 73 | 呆 85 | 德 92 | 顶 96  |
| 疮 70   | cu   | 待 85 | deng | 鼎 96  |
| 窗 70   | 粗 74 | 戴 86 | 灯 92 | diu   |
| chui   | 促 74 | dan  | 登 93 | 丢 97  |
| 吹 70   | cui  | 单 86 | 等 93 | dong  |
| 垂 70   | 摧 75 | 箪 86 | di   | 东 97  |
| chun   | cun  | 担 86 | 低 93 | 动 98  |
| 春 71   | 存 75 | 胆 86 | 滴 94 | 洞 98  |
| 唇 71   | 寸 75 | 淡 87 | 地 94 | dou   |
| 鹑 72   | cuo  | 弹 87 | dian | 斗 98  |
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| chuo   | 厝 76 | 党 88 | 点 95 | 独 98  |
| 绰 72   | 措 76 | 当 89 | diao | 睹 100 |
| ci     | 错 76 | dao  | 刁 95 | 度 100 |
| 词 72   | D    | 刀 89 | 雕 95 | duan  |
| 此 73   | da   | 蹈 89 | 调 96 | 端 101 |
| 刺 73   | 打 76 | 倒 89 | 掉 96 | 短 101 |
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|        |      | 道 90 | 迭 96 | dui   |
|        |      |      |      | 对 101 |

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| 顿 102 | 繁 107 | 愤 114 | 富 123 | 歌 129 |
| duo   | 反 107 | feng  | 腹 123 | 革 129 |
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| 面 253 | 莫 262 | nao   | 宁 270 | 攀 274 |
| miao  | 漠 262 | 脑 267 | niu   | 盘 274 |
| 妙 255 | 墨 263 | nei   | 牛 271 | 判 274 |
| mie   | 默 263 | 内 267 | nong  | pang  |
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## 条目笔画索引

一、本索引按汉字笔画笔形排列。首先按每条成语第一个字的笔画分类，笔画少的在前，笔画多的在后。同类笔画的按笔顺笔形排列。笔顺按习惯，一般先左后右、先上后下。笔形分五种，次序是横（一）竖（丨）撇（丿）点（丶）折（乚）。第一个字相同的成语按第二个字的笔画笔形排列。

二、横（一）竖（丨）撇（丿）点（丶）折（乚）以外的笔形按下面的办法处理：

1. 趯（㇏）作横（一），例如“习、习、习、习、习、习、习、习、习、习”中的“习、习”都作横（一）。

2. 捺（㇏）作点（丶），例如“人、人、木、木”中的“人、人”都作点（丶）。

3. 笔形曲折的如“乚、乚、乚、乚、乚、乚、乚、乚、乚、乚”等都作折（乚）。

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## A

【哀兵必胜】āi bīng bì shèng

an army burning with righteous indignation is bound to win

【哀而不伤】āi ér bù shāng

deeply felt but not sentimental/ mournful, but not distressing

【哀鸿遍野】āi hóng biàn yě

a land swarming with famished refugees/ famine refugees swarm the countryside/ the poor and helpless roam about in their plight/ destitute people to be found everywhere

【挨门逐户】āi mén zhú hù

go from door to door (or house to house)

【唉声叹气】āi shēng tàn qì

heave deep sighs/ sigh in despair/ moan and groan

【爱不释手】ài bù shì shǒu

love sth so much that one is loath to part with it/ cannot bear to part with/ fondle admiringly/ reluctant to give up

【爱财如命】ài cái rú mìng

regard wealth as one's life/ very stingy/ skin a flea for its hide/ money-grubbing

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**【爱莫能助】** ài mò néng zhù

it's beyond one's ability to render assistance although  
one would like to/ willing to help but unable to do  
so

**【爱屋及乌】** ài wū jí wū

the love for the house extends even to the crows  
perching on it — love one thing on account of another/  
when one loves another the affection extends even to  
the crows on the roof/ he that loves the tree loves the  
branch/ love me, love my dog

**【爱憎分明】** ài zēng fēn míng

draw a clear demarcation between whom or what to  
love and whom or what to hate/be clear about what  
to love and what to hate

**【碍手碍脚】** ài shǒu ài jiǎo

be in the way/ be a hindrance

**【安步当车】** ān bù dāng chē

stroll leisurely instead of taking a carriage and enjoy  
it as much/ walk over leisurely instead of riding in a  
carriage/ to walk quietly is as good as riding in a car-  
riage/ walk rather than ride/like to stretch one's  
legs

**【安不忘危】** ān bù wàng wēi

in peace remember the possibilities of danger/ in time  
of peace do not forget danger/ mindful of possible  
danger in time of peace



**【安分守己】** ān fèn shǒu jǐ

abide by the law and behave oneself/ keep one's duty and self-restraint/ know one's place/ mind one's own business/ keep to (or take) one's own line/ keep to oneself/ be contented with one's lot/ act proper to one's status/ law-abiding/ dutiful

**【安家落户】** ān jiā luò hù

make one's home in a place/ settle down

**【安居乐业】** ān jū lè yè

live and work in peace and contentment/ live a prosperous and contented life/ enjoy a good and prosperous life/ quite contented with one's life and work

**【安民告示】** ān mín gào shì

a notice to reassure the public/ advance notice (of an agenda, etc.)

**【安然无恙】** ān rán wú yàng

safe and sound/ without accident/ sound in life and limb/ all is well/ get (or come) off with a whole skin/ fall on one's feet/ (escape) unscathed

**【安如磐石】** ān rú pán shí

as solid as a rock/ secure as a huge rock/ absolute tranquillity/ great security

**【安如泰山】** ān rú tài shān

as secure (or stable) as Mount Taishan/ as firm (or solid) as a rock/ like a rock/ rock-firm

**【安身立命】** ān shēn lì mìng

settle down and get on with one's pursuit

【安土重迁】ān tǔ zhòng qiān

hate to leave a place where one has lived long/ do not care to migrate from native land/ be attached to one's native land and unwilling to leave it/ fond of one's home and loath to leave it for other parts

【安营扎寨】ān yíng zhā zhài

pitch a camp/ encamp(one's troops)/ camp

【安于现状】ān yú xiàn zhuàng

be content with things as they are/ be satisfied with the existing state of affairs

【安之若素】ān zhī ruò sù

bear(hardship, etc.) with equanimity/ regard(wrongdoing, etc.) with equanimity/ resign oneself with equanimity

【按兵不动】àn bīng bù dòng

station(or halt)the troops(and wait for a right time to strike)/ not to make any move(until an opportunity occurs)/ not throw the troops into battle/ keep troops entrenched/ take no action/ bide one's time

【按部就班】àn bù jiù bān

follow the prescribed order(or way)/ keep to conventional ways of doing things/ proceed in order/ work strictly by protocol/ step by step/ move(or run)in a groove(or rut)/learn to creep before you leap(or walk)/ systematically

**【按图索骥】** àn tú suǒ jì

look for a steed according to the one in the picture—  
try to locate sth by following up a clue/ locate (or  
look for) sth by a plan (or chart)/ search after sth ac-  
cording to the track

**【暗渡陈仓】** àn dù chén cāng

advance secretly along (or by) an unknown path/ steal  
a march on/ do a thing in secret

**【暗箭伤人】** àn jiàn shāng rén

wound with a sniping arrow/ stab sb in the back/ in-  
jure sb by underhand means/ make snipping attacks/  
hit below the belt

**【暗送秋波】** àn sòng qiū bō

make eyes at sb while others are not looking/  
stealthily give sb the glad eye/ make secret overture  
to sb/ leer at/ ogle

**【暗无天日】** àn wú tiān rì

complete darkness/ gross lack of justice under mis-  
government/ total absence of justice

**【暗中摸索】** àn zhōng mō suǒ

grope in the dark

**【黯然失色】** àn rán shī sè

be overshadowed/ be eclipsed/ pale into insignifi-  
cance/ pale by comparison

**【昂首阔步】** áng shǒu kuò bù

stride forward with one's chin up/ march forward

with head (or chin) up and chest out/ stride proudly ahead

【嗷嗷待哺】áo áo dài bū  
cry piteously for food

## B

【八面玲珑】bā miàn líng lóng  
(of character) manage to please everybody/ (of speech) cover all sides beautifully/ be smooth and slick (in establishing social relations)/ be a good mixer/ all things to all men

【八面威风】bā miàn wēi fēng  
an awe-inspiring reputation extending in every direction

【八仙过海, 各显神通】bā xiān guò hǎi, gè xiǎn shén tōng  
like the Eight Immortals (in the legend) crossing the sea, each one showing his (or her) special prowess/ try to outshine each other/ vie with each other

【跋山涉水】bá shān shè shuǐ  
scale mountains and ford streams/ travel across mountains and rivers/ cross (or travel) over land and water

【白璧微瑕】bái bì wēi xiá

a flaw in a white jade — a slight blemish (in man's good character)/ small faults

【白璧无瑕】bái bì wú xiá

flawless white jade — impeccable moral integrity

【白驹过隙】bái jū guò xì

the white colt passed the crack — time flies/ (life is short) like a white pony's shadow across a crevice/ in a split second/ time passes swiftly

【白面书生】bái miàn shū shēng

pale-faced scholar/ inexperienced in life

【白日见鬼】bái rì jiàn guǐ

see demons in broad daylight — of a strange, absurd, impossible thing

【白日作梦】bái rì zuò mèng

dream daydreams/ indulge in wishful thinking/ cherish a pipe(of fond)dream/ daydream

【白手起家】bái shǒu qǐ jiā

rise in life by one's own efforts/ build up from scratch(or nothing)/ start from scratch/ start empty-handed/ self-made

【白头偕老】bái tóu xié lǎo

(of married couple) reach old age together/ live to ripe old age in conjugal bliss/ remain a devoted couple to the end of their lives

【百步穿杨】bǎi bù chuān yáng

shoot an arrow through a willow leaf a hundred paces

away — shoot with great precision (or with pinpoint accuracy)/ the shots hit every time

【百尺竿头,更进一步】bǎi chǐ gān tóu, gèng jìn yī bù  
make further progress from the satisfactory base/  
strive for further (or greater) progress/ take one more  
step forward/ keep forging ahead

【百川归海】bǎi chuān guī hǎi  
all rivers flow to the sea — all things tend in one direc-  
tion/ all streams meet in the sea

【百读不厌】bǎi dú bù yàn  
be worth reading a hundred times

【百端待举】bǎi duān dài jǔ  
a thousand things wait to be done — have one hundred  
and one things to attend to/ numerous tasks remain  
to be undertaken

【百发百中】bǎi fā bǎi zhòng  
a hundred hits for every hundred shots/ shoot with  
unfailing accuracy/ hit the mark every time/ a hun-  
dred shots, a hundred bull's eyes/ make every shot  
tell/ shoot with superb marksmanship

【百废俱兴】bǎi fèi jù xīng  
put a hundred broken things right all at once — full-  
scale reconstruction is under way/ all neglected tasks  
are being undertaken/ do everything abandoned (all)  
at once

【百感交集】bǎi gǎn jiāo jí  
a multitude of feelings surges up/ all sorts of feelings

well up in one's heart/ crowd upon one's mind

【百花齐放, 百家争鸣】bǎi huā qí fàng, bǎi jiā zhēng míng

let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend

【百孔千疮】bǎi kǒng qiān chuāng

a hundred holes, a thousand scars — be riddled with gaping wounds/ be full of ills and troubles/ be afflicted with all ills/ in a disastrous state

【百口莫辩】bǎi kǒu mò biàn

a hundred mouths cannot explain it away

【百里挑一】bǎi lǐ tiāo yī

one in a hundred/ cream of the crop

【百炼成钢】bǎi liàn chéng gāng

be tempered into steel/ be toughened and hardened into steel/ be steeled(or tempered)in repeated struggles/ be put through the mill

【百年大计】bǎi nián dà jì

a grand hundred-year plan—an undertaking of fundamental importance for generations to come/ a project of vital and lasting importance

【百年树人】bǎi nián shù rén (见“十年树木, 百年树人”)

【百思不解】bǎi sī bù jiě

remain puzzled after pondering over sth a hundred times/ fail to understand although one thinks hard/ remain perplexed despite much thought/ can't figure

out/ incomprehensible/ inscrutable/ unfathomable

【百闻不如一见】bǎi wén bù rú yī jiàn

it is better to see once than hear a hundred times/  
seeing once is better than hearing a hundred times/  
seeing is believing/ one look is worth a thousand  
words/ there is nothing like seeing for yourself

【百无禁忌】bǎi wú jìn jì

nothing to be superstitious about — no restrictions of  
any kind here, in the way of taboo or things to be  
avoided/ without restraint/ stop at nothing

【百无聊赖】bǎi wú liáo lài

utterly bored/ bored to death/ bored stiff/ overcome  
with boredom

【百无一失】bǎi wú yī shī

no danger of anything going wrong/ cannot possibly  
go wrong/ no risk at all

【百依百顺】bǎi yī bǎi shùn

obey in every way/ docile and obedient/ all obedi-  
ence/ obedient in all things/ dance after (or to) sb's  
pipe (piping or whistle)/ be at a person's beck and  
call

【百战百胜】bǎi zhàn bǎi shèng

fight a hundred battles, win a hundred victories — e-  
merge victorious in every battle/ win battle after bat-  
tle/ carry all before one/ ever — victorious/ invincible

【百折不挠】bǎi zhé bù náo



keep on fighting in spite of all setbacks/ be unflinching in the face of setbacks/ make unbending efforts to/ put up an obstinate resistance/ be indomitable/ be assiduous in/ tenacity of purpose/ never say die/ persistent/ unremitting/ persevering/ unflinching/ unbending

【百足之虫,死而不僵】bǎi zú zhī chóng, sǐ ér bù jiāng  
a centipede does not topple over even when dead/ a centipede dies but never falls down/ old institutions die hard

【败军之将】bài jūn zhī jiāng  
a defeated general

【稗官野史】bài guān yě shǐ  
books containing anecdotes

【班门弄斧】bān mén nòng fǔ  
show off one's proficiency with the axe before Lu Ban the master carpenter — display one's slight skill before an expert/ show off in the presence of an old hand/ teach one's grandmother how to suck eggs

【斑驳陆离】bān bó lù lí  
variegated(colours)/ motley-coloured

【搬弄是非】bān nòng shì fēi  
sow discord/ tell tales/ make mischief

【搬起石头打自己的脚】bān qǐ shí tóu dǎ zì jǐ de jiǎo  
lift a rock only to drop it on one's own feet/ lift a rock only to have one's toes squashed/ be hoist with

(or by) one's own petard

【版版六十四】bǎn bǎn liù shí sì

unaccommodating/ rigid

【半壁江山】bàn bì jiāng shān

half of the country (or land) (usu. referring to the unoccupied part of an invaded country)/ an independent section of the country/ the remaining land

【半斤八两】bàn jīn bā liǎng

half a catty and eight ounces/ half a pound of one and eight ounces of the other/ six of one and half a dozen of the other/ not much to choose between the two/ much of a muchness/ tweedledum and tweedledee

【半路出家】bàn lù chū jiā

become a monk or nun late in life — switch to a job one was not trained for/ without solid foundation (or training)

【半途而废】bàn tú ér fèi

stop (abandon, collapse, leave off, or give up) halfway/ do sth by halves/ leave sth unfinished/ fail to complete a thing

【半推半就】bàn tuī bàn jiù

half refusing, half accepting/ half rejecting, half yielding/ yield while pretending to reject

【半信半疑】bàn xìn bàn yí

half believe and half doubt (or half-believing, half-doubting)/ be dubious of (or about)/ half in doubt/

not quite convinced/ doubtfully

【傍人门户】bàng rén mén hù

be dependent on sb for living

【包藏祸心】bāo cáng huò xīn

harbour evil (or malicious) intentions/ hide a malicious intent/ entertain rebellion

【包罗万象】bāo luó wàn xiàng

cover and contain everything/ all-embracing/ all-inclusive/ encyclopaedic

【饱汉不知饿汉饥】bǎo hàn bù zhī è hàn jī

the well-fed don't know how the starving suffer

【饱经风霜】bǎo jīng fēng shuāng

having experienced the hardships of life/ having gone through all hardships/ go through the mill/ weather-beaten/ storm-beaten/ much-weathered

【饱食终日,无所用心】bǎo shí zhōng rì, wú suǒ yòng xīn

eat three square meals a day and do not work/ eat one's fill and idle about all day long/ spend one's day in food and drink and have an empty head/ loaf about (or around) all day long and do nothing/ live like a parasite/ become a mere vegetable

【饱以老拳】bǎo yǐ lǎo quán

hit one full in the face

【报仇雪恨】bào chóu xuě hèn

revenge a national humiliation/ revenge and wipe out



a standing grudge (against sb)/ avenge oneself/ take one's revenge (on sb)/ glut one's revenge/ retaliate

【抱残守缺】bào cán shǒu quē

cherish the outmoded and preserve the outworn -- be conservative/ retain what is old and outworn/ be a stickler for ancient ways and things

【抱恨终天】bào hèn zhōng tiān

harbor an eternal sorrow/ regret sth to the end of one's days/ regret forever (or all one's life)/ bitterly lament

【抱头鼠窜】bào tóu shǔ cuàn

cover the head and sneak away like a rat/ flee with arms covering one's head/ scurry (or scamper) off like a frightened rat/ run wildly like cornered rats/ flee helter-skelter

【抱薪救火】bào xīn jiù huǒ

carry faggots to put out a fire -- adopt a wrong method to save a situation and end up by making it worse

【豹死留皮】bào sǐ liú pí

the leopard dies but leaves his skin -- as a man leaves his reputation/ leopard's skin survives the body

【暴风骤雨】bào fēng zhòu yǔ

violent (or mighty) storm/ tempest/ hurricane

【暴虎冯河】bào hǔ píng hé

attack a tiger without weapons and cross a river without a boat -- be brave but not resourceful/ be

foolhardy

【暴戾恣睢】bào lì zì suī

extremely cruel and despotic/ violent tempered/  
cross-grained

【暴露无遗】bào lù wú yí

be completely unmasked/ be thoroughly exposed

【暴殄天物】bào tiǎn tiān wù

wasteful use of things from Heaven — waste natural  
products/ wantonly destroy (or waste) products of na-  
ture

【暴跳如雷】bào tiào rú léi

(be) in a thundering rage/ (be) in a frenzy of rage/  
rant and rave/ stamp (or rave) with fury/ fly into a  
rage/ go on the rampage/ hit the ceiling/ as savage as  
a meat axe

【杯弓蛇影】bēi gōng shé yǐng

mistaking the reflection (or shadow) of a bow in the  
cup for a snake — extremely suspicious/ see a  
serpent's image in a wine cup/ self-created suspicion/  
imaginary fears

【杯盘狼藉】bēi pán láng jí

stacks of cups and dishes — scene of big dinner/ wine  
cups and dishes lying about in disorder after a feast/  
with wine glasses and plates spread all over a dining  
table

【杯水车薪】bēi shuǐ chē xīn

B

trying to put out a burning cartload of faggots with a cup of water—an utterly inadequate measure/ try to extinguish (or put out) the fire of a cartload of firewood with a cup of water—a useless attempt

【卑鄙齷齪】bēi bǐ wò chuò

sordid/ foul/ mean/ contemptible

【卑躬屈膝】bēi gōng qū xī

humiliate oneself in serving sb/ bow low and humiliate oneself/ bow and scrape/ act servilely (or obsequiously) / be subservient/ lick sb's boots (feet, shoes or spittle)/ go (or come) with cap in hand to/ cringe

【悲愤填膺】bēi fèn tián yīng

be filled with grief and indignation/ with sadness and anger at heart (or in one's heart)/ feel sad and angry/ burning with indignation

【悲欢离合】bēi huān lí hé

joys and sorrows, partings and reunions—vicissitudes of life/ joys and sorrows of meeting and parting/ the sorrow of separation and the joy of reunion/ chequered career

【悲天悯人】bēi tiān mǐn rén

bemoan the state of the universe and pity the fate of mankind/ feeling for universal compassion/ have (or take) cosmic pity on/ pity for all mankind/ broadhearted kindness

**【悲喜交集】** bēi xǐ jiāo jí

mixed feelings of grief and joy/ grief and joy intermingled/ joy tempered with sorrow/ mingled feelings

**【背城借一】** bèi chéng jiè yī

make a last-ditch stand before the city wall/ fight to the last ditch/ put up a desperate struggle/ try to fight one's way out/ fight with a rope round one's neck/ make a spoon or spoil a horn

**【背道而驰】** bèi dào ér chí

run in opposite direction/run counter to/ be diametrically opposed to/ contradict the whole purpose of/ draw further apart

**【背水一战】** bèi shuǐ yī zhàn

fight with one's back to the river — fight to win or die/ put up a last-ditch struggle/ a death-struggle/ cross the Rubicon/ stand at(or turn to)bay

**【背信弃义】** bèi xìn qì yì

break faith with (sb)/ break one's word/ violate a treaty/ be perfidious/throw sb over the bridge/ play sb false (or foul)/ bad faith/ Punic faith/ faithless/ treacherously/ traitorous

**【悖入悖出】** bèi rù bèi chū

gains, which come in a wrong way, will leave in a wrong way/ ill-gotten, ill-spent

**【奔走相告】** bēn zǒu xiāng gào

run around spreading the news/ lose no time in telling each other the news/ rush about telling the good news (or message)/ pass the news from one person to another (or from mouth to mouth)

【本来面目】běn lái miàn mù

the original expression/ the natural form/ true colours/ true features

【本末倒置】běn mò dào zhì

take the branch for the root/ put the incidental before the fundamental/ attend to the superficials and neglect the essentials/ turn things inside out (or upside down) / put (or set) the cart before the horse

【本性难移】běn xìng nán yí

it is difficult to alter one's character/ the leopard cannot change his spots/ the wolf may grow grey but never good

【笨鸟先飞】bèn niǎo xiān fēi

clumsy birds have to start flying early — the slow need to start early (used as a modest expression of one's need for caution)

【逼上梁山】bī shàng liáng shān

be driven to join the Liangshan rebels/ be driven to revolt/ be forced to do sth desperate/ be compelled to do sth against one's will/ be driven to drastic alternatives/ be driven to extremity (or extremities)



【比比皆是】bǐ bǐ jiē shì

can be seen (or found) everywhere/ they are everywhere/ all like that/ a universal phenomenon



【比肩继踵】bǐ jiān jì zhǒng

walk shoulder-to-shoulder/ follow in the footsteps of another/ crowd around/ be crowded (or inundated) with (people)/ jostle each other

【比上不足，比下有余】bǐ shàng bù zú, bǐ xià yǒu yú

fall short of the best but be better than the worst/ worse off than some, better off than many/ contented to be middling/ can pass muster

【彼一时，此一时】bǐ yī shí, cǐ yī shí

that was one situation, and this is another — times have changed/ the times are different, not comparable

【笔墨官司】bǐ mò guān sī

controversy in writing/ written polemics (or controversy)/ paper arguments/ paper polemics/ a battle of words

【必恭必敬】bì gōng bì jìng

reverent and respectful/ extremely deferential/ very polite/ politely and respectfully/ be reverential/ (with one's) hat in (one's) hand

【必由之路】bì yóu zhī lù

the only route which must be passed/ the road one must follow or take/ the only way (or road)/ in-

evitable course

【闭关锁国】bì guān suǒ guó

close the communications at the borders/ close the border/ lock one's doors against the world

【闭关自守】bì guān zì shǒu

stop international intercourse for defence/ close the country to trade (or international intercourse)/ live in isolation/ closed-door (policy)

【闭门羹】bì mén gēng

be denied entrance/ slam the door in one's face/ find the door slammed/ meet with a door banged shut/ be left out in the cold/ receive cold shoulder treatment

【闭门思过】bì mén sī guò

shut oneself up and ponder over one's mistakes/ meditate on one's own faults behind closed doors/ reflect on one's misdeeds in private/ ponder over one's mistakes in solitude

【闭门造车】bì mén zào chē

make a cart behind closed doors/ draw up plans behind closed doors/ work at some project without reference to the actual needs/ divorce oneself from the masses and from reality and act blindly/ impractical

【闭目塞听】bì mù sè tīng

shut one's eyes and stop up one's ears — be out of touch with reality/ turn a blind eye and a deaf ear

(to)/ shut one's eyes and ears (to)/ blind obstinacy

【闭塞眼睛捉麻雀】bì sè yǎn jīng zhuō má què

try to catch sparrows with one's eyes blindfolded — act blindly

【毕其功于一役】bì qí gōng yú yī yì

accomplish the whole task at one stroke

【敝帚自珍】bì zhǒu zì zhēn

value one's own old broom — cherish sth of little value simply because it is one's own

【筭路蓝缕】bì lù lán lǚ

drive a cart in ragged clothes to blaze a new trail — endure great hardships in pioneer work/ put on one's wornout clothes to cut wood and swaths in jungle/ be a trail blazer or pioneer in opening up virgin lands/ the pioneering spirit

【避坑落井】bì kēng luò jǐng

dodge a pit only to fall into a well/ escape one difficulty only to fall into another/ out of the frying pan into the fire

【避其锐气，击其惰归】bì qí ruì qì, jī qí duò guī

avoid the enemy when he is fresh and strike him when he is tired and withdraws

【避实就虚】bì shí jiù xū

stay clear of the enemy's main force and strike at his weak points/ strike where the enemy is weakest/

dwell on the abstract to avoid real issues

【避重就轻】bì zhòng jiù qīng

choose the light and avoid the heavy/ avoid the important and dwell on the trivial/ shirk the difficult and take the easy/ evade serious matters and take up trifles/ take up the minor issue to evade the major one

【壁垒森严】bì lěi sēn yán

strong defence preparations/ two sharply opposed sides/ closely guarded/ strongly fortified/ sharply divided

【鞭辟入里】biān bì rù lǐ

penetrating/ trenchant/ incisive

【鞭长莫及】biān cháng mò jí

beyond the reach of one's power (or authority)/ beyond one's ability (or reach)/ too far away for one to be able to help/ cannot do it much as one would like to

【扁担没扎,两头打塌】biǎn dàn méi zā, liǎng tóu dǎ tā

when the carrying pole is not secured at both ends, its loads slip off — try to grab both but end up getting neither

【变本加厉】biàn běn jiā lì

become aggravated/ be further intensified/ with ever-increasing intensity/ go even further/ outdo the previous ones/ go from bad to worse

【变化无常】biàn huà wú cháng

constantly changing/ changing all the time/ hop from one thing to another/ flux and reflux/ chop and change/ changeful/ erratic/ capricious/ fickle

【变幻莫测】biàn huàn mò cè

change unpredictably/ unending changes/ unpredictable/ capricious/ changeable

【便宜行事】biàn yí xíng shì

act as circumstances may require/ act at one's discretion/ act as one sees fit

【遍地开花】biàn dì kāi huā

blossom everywhere/ spring up all over the place/ spring up like mushrooms

【遍体鳞伤】biàn tǐ lín shāng

whole body covered with wounds/ one's whole body was wounded seriously/ covered all over with cuts and bruises/ beaten black and blue/ be a mass of bruises

【标新立异】biāo xīn lì yì

start something new in order to be different/ do something unconventional or unorthodox/ create something new and original/ uphold what is new and establish what is distinctive

【表里如一】biǎo lǐ rú yī

outside and inside the same/ think and act in one and the same way/ conformity of profession and

conduct/ make one's appearance tally with one's inner mind/ be what one professes to be/ true to one's word/ sincere

【别出心裁】bié chū xīn cái

create new styles (or fashions)/ have an unconventional (or out-of-the-ordinary) idea/ adopt an original approach/ try to be different

【别久情疏】bié jiǔ qíng shū

long absent, soon forgotten/ out of sight, out of mind

【别具一格】bié jù yī gé

having a unique (or distinctive) style/ original in style (or design)/ in a class by itself (or oneself)/ have a style of one's own

【别开生面】bié kāi shēng miàn

open up a fresh outlook (or style)/ do a thing in an unusual way/ break a new path/ break fresh ground/ start sth new (or original)/ in a novel way

【别树一帜】bié shù yī zhì

raise another standard — get out of the rut/ set up a new banner/ act independently

【别无长物】bié wú cháng wù

have only bare necessities (and no savings)/ possessing nothing but

【别有天地】bié yǒu tiān dì

like another world/ a different world/ a place of u-

nique beauty/ scenery of exceptional charm

【别有用心】bié yǒu yòng xīn

have another motive/ with ulterior motives (or purposes)/ with an ulterior object in view/ harbour ulterior motives/ have an axe to grind/ have sth up one's sleeve

【宾至如归】bīn zhì rú guī

guests (or customers) come as if they have returned home—make every guest (or customer) feel at home/ a home from home

【彬彬有礼】bīn bīn yǒu lǐ

in a civil manner/ refined and courteous/ well-mannered/ urbane

【冰冻三尺，非一日之寒】bīng dòng sān chǐ, fēi yī rì zhī hán

it takes more than one cold day for the river to freeze three feet deep—the trouble has been brewing for quite some time/ one cold day does not make the river freeze three feet thick.

【冰炭不相容】bīng tàn bù xiāng róng

as incompatible (or irreconcilable) as ice and hot coals

【冰天雪地】bīng tiān xuě dì

a world of ice and snow

【冰消瓦解】bīng xiāo wǎ jiě

melt like ice and break like tiles—vanish from the



scene/ disintegrate

【兵不血刃】bīng bù xuè rèn

the swords not being blood-stained — win a victory without striking a blow (or firing a shot)/ win without using weapons or losing a life/ achieve victory without fighting

【兵不厌诈】bīng bù yàn zhà

nothing is too deceitful in war/ there can never be too much deception in war/ all is fair in war

【兵贵神速】bīng guì shén sù

speed is most valuable in military affairs/ speed is precious in war/ speed is soldier's asset

【兵荒马乱】bīng huāng mǎ luàn

the stresses and strains of a war/ turmoil and chaos of war/ be completely in war chaos

【兵连祸结】bīng lián huò jié

ravaged by successive wars — war-torn/ continuous wars and turmoil/ war-ridden

【兵临城下】bīng lín chéng xià

the attacking army has reached the city gates/ the city is under siege

【兵强马壮】bīng qiáng mǎ zhuàng

strong soldiers and sturdy horses — well-trained and powerful army

【兵戎相见】bīng róng xiāng jiàn

resort (or appeal) to arms/ meet on the battle ground/



cross swords with/ open hostilities

【并驾齐驱】bìng jià qí qū

advancing in line/hold (or keep) pace with/keep abreast of one another/keep abreast with/ride abreast/make good running with/share equally/run neck and neck/keep up with/keep in step/with equal pace

【并行不悖】bìng xíng bù bèi

both can be implemented without coming into conflict/ parallel and not contrary to each other/ the parallel two do not interfere with one another/ not be mutually exclusive/ run parallel/ can be carried out at the same time

【病从口入】bìng cóng kǒu rù

diseases enter by the mouth/ illness finds its way in by the mouth

【病笃乱投医】bìng dǔ luàn tóu yī

turn to any doctor one can find when critically ill — try anything when in a desperate situation

【病入膏肓】bìng rù gāo huāng

the disease has attacked the vitals — beyond cure/ sick to the core/ rotten to the core/ be past praying for/ incurably sick/ fatal disease/ hopeless case

【波澜壮阔】bō lán zhuàng kuò

surge forward with great momentum/ surge high and sweep forward/ unfold on a magnificent scale/ sweep ahead magnificently

【拨乱反正】bō luàn fǎn zhèng



bring order out of chaos/ set to rights things which have been thrown into disorder/ turn from heterodoxy to the right path

【拨云见天】bō yún jiàn tiān

dispel(or scatter)the clouds and see the sun—restore justice/ sweep away the clouds and bring sb the sunlight

【伯仲之间】bó zhòng zhī jiān

almost on a par

【博而不精】bó ér bù jīng

have wide but not expert knowledge/have wide but shallow knowledge/know something about everything

【博古通今】bó gǔ tōng jīn

conversant with(both)ancient and modern learning/acquainted with things ancient and modern/ versed in both ancient and modern knowledge/ erudite and informed

【博闻强记】bó wén qiáng jì

(have both) wide learning and a powerful (or retentive)memory/ have encyclopaedic knowledge

【博学多才】bó xué duō cái

learned and versatile/ erudite and talented

【补偏救弊】bǔ piān jiù bì

rectify deviation and error

【捕风捉影】bǔ fēng zhuō yǐng

chase the wind and clutch at shadows—make ground-

less accusations/ catch at shadows (or run after a shadow)/ speak or act on hearsay evidence/ trump up a story

【**不白之冤**】bù bái zhī yuān

unrighted wrong/ unredressed injustice/ a case of being wrongly accused

【**不败之地**】bù bài zhī dì

invincible position

【**不辨菽麦**】bù biàn shū mài

can not tell beans from wheat—have no knowledge of practical matters/ not know chalk from cheese

【**不成体统**】bù chéng tǐ tǒng

behave very badly/ unseemly

【**不耻下问**】bù chǐ xià wèn

not feel ashamed to ask and learn from one's subordinates/ not ashamed to seek opinion of one's inferiors/ stoop to ask questions from common people

【**不打不成相识**】bù dǎ bù chéng xiāng shí

from an exchange of blows friendship grows/ no discord, no concord

【**不打自招**】bù dǎ zì zhāo

make a confession, admit fault freely (or unintentionally)/ make a confession without duress/ without being pressed, one lets the cat out of the bag/ (make) an unsolicited (or unsought) confession/ a frank avowal/ a self-confession

【不到黄河心不死】bù dào huáng hé xīn bù sǐ

not stop until one reaches the Huanghe River -- not stop until one reaches one's goal/ refuse to give up until all hope is gone/ not give up till coming to a dead end/ until all is over ambition never dies

【不得人心】bù dé rén xīn

not enjoy popular support/ be unpopular

【不得要领】bù dé yào lǐng

fail to grasp the main points/ could not bring the matter to a head/ unable to make head or tail of sth/ miss the point/ beside the point

【不登大雅之堂】bù dēng dà yǎ zhī táng

unqualified to take its place in the higher circles/ on the margin of good taste/ not appeal to refined taste/ in bad taste/ unrefined/indecent

【不动声色】bù dòng shēng sè

not show one's feelings/ not turn a hair/ not bat an eyelid/ not move a muscle/ set one's face like a flint/ cool as a cucumber/ maintain one's composure/ stay calm and collected/ keep one's countenance

【不二法门】bù èr fǎ mén

the one and only way/ the only means to/ the only proper course to take/ no other way/ the only formula

【不乏其人】bù fá qí rén

no lack of such people/ such people are not rare

【不费吹灰之力】bù fèi chuī huī zhī lì

as easy as blowing the dust off a table—need only the slightest effort/ with minimum effort/ it's a walkover/ (as)easy as ABC

【不分彼此】bù fēn bǐ cǐ

make no distinction between what's one's own and what's another's/ no distinction between mine and thine/ have things in common/ share everything/ be on very intimate terms

【不分皂白】bù fēn zào bái

make no distinction between black and white (or right and wrong)/ irrespective of right and wrong in a dispute/ in a promiscuous manner/ indiscriminate(ly)

【不甘后人】bù gān hòu rén

unwilling to lag behind/ hate to be outdone/ cannot bear playing the second fiddle

【不甘示弱】bù gān shì ruò

unwilling to show one's weakness/ yield no ground

【不敢越雷池一步】bù gǎn yuè léi chí yī bù

dare not go one step beyond the prescribed limit/ dare not exceed the utmost limits one can go/ keep within (the) bounds

【不攻自破】bù gōng zì pò

(of some fallacy) cannot stand any refutation/ collapse of itself

【不共戴天】bù gòng dài tiān

cannot share the same sky (with one's enemy) — ab-

solutely irreconcilable/ not able to live together beneath the same heaven (or under the same sky) / refuse to live in the same world/ have a deep-seated hatred for

【不苟言笑】bù gǒu yán xiào

discreet (or serious) in speech and manner/ quiet and reserved

【不管三七二十一】bù guǎn sān qī èr shí yī

casting all caution to the winds/ regardless of the consequences/ no matter what you may say/ come what may/ recklessly

【不过尔尔】bù guò ěr ěr

just so-so/ merely mediocre/ just middling

【不寒而栗】bù hán ér lì

shiver all over though not cold/ tremble with fear/ shudder

【不合时宜】bù hé shí yí

not tally with the circumstances of the time/ incompatible with the present needs/ out of accord with the times/ off time/ out of season/ untimely/ ill-timed/ inopportune/ unseasonable

【不欢而散】bù huān ér sǎn

end in discord/ break up unpleasantly/part on bad terms/ end on an unpleasant note

【不即不离】bù jí bù lí

be neither too familiar nor too distant/ maintain a

discreet distance/ keep sb at arm's length

【不急之务】bù jí zhī wù

business requiring no immediate attention/ a non-urgent business/a matter of no great urgency

【不计其数】bù jì qí shù

unable to tell the number/ beyond (or out of) count/ beyond compute/ innumerable/ countless

【不假思索】bù jiǎ sī suǒ

without stopping to think/ without thinking/ without hesitation/ spur - of - the - moment/ readily/ off-hand

【不见棺材不落泪】bù jiàn guān cái bù luò lèi

not shed a tear until one sees the coffin—refuse to be convinced until one is faced with grim reality

【不见经传】bù jiàn jīng zhuàn

not to be found in the classics — not authoritative/ unknown

【不骄不躁】bù jiāo bù zào

guard against self-conceit and rashness/ free from arrogance and rashness/ be neither conceited nor rash/ be not proud or touchy

【不近人情】bù jìn rén qíng

not amenable to reason/ unreasonable

【不进则退】bù jìn zé tuì

more forward, or you'll fall behind

【不经一事，不长一智】bù jīng yī shì, bù zhǎng yī zhì

you can't gain knowledge without practice/ wisdom comes from experience/ in doing we learn

【不经之谈】bù jīng zhī tán

absurd talking (or statement)/ preposterous statement/ sheer nonsense/cock-and-bull story

【不胫而走】bù jīng ér zǒu

run without legs/ spread like wildfire/ spread far and wide/ get round fast

【不拘小节】bù jū xiǎo jié

neglect of minor points of conduct/ not bother about small matters/ unconstrained by formalities/ not be punctilious/ no stickler for formality

【不拘一格】bù jū yī gé

not formalistic to one style (or pattern)/ not conform (or stick) to one pattern/ follow no set form (or pattern)

【不绝如缕】bù jué rú lǚ

hanging by a thread/ very precarious/ at critical condition/ almost extinct/ (of sound) linger on faintly

【不堪回首】bù kān huí shǒu

cannot bear to think of the past/ find it unbearable to recall/ too sad to look back/ too sad to reflect (on past)

【不堪设想】bù kān shè xiǎng

could not bear to think of it/ dare not imagine/ unbearable (or dreadful) to contemplate/unimaginable/



inconceivable

【不堪一击】bù kān yī jī

cannot withstand a single blow/ collapse at the first blow

【不堪造就】bù kān zào jiù

cannot be trained/ not worth educating/ hopeless to succeed in life/ unpromising

【不亢不卑】bù kàng bù bēi

neither obsequious nor arrogant/ neither cringing nor rude/ neither haughty nor humble/ neither overbearing nor servile/ neither supercilious nor obsequious/ neither humble nor pert

【不可多得】bù kě duō dé

hard to come by/ rare

【不可救药】bù kě jiù yào

beyond (or past) cure (remedy or reclaim)/ too far gone for medicines/ there is no remedy for/ incurable/ irremediable/ incorrigible/ hopeless

【不可开交】bù kě kāi jiāo

unable to get away/ not having a moment one can call one's own/ up to one's eyes (or ears) (in the work)

【不可理喻】bù kě lǐ yù

incapable of being brought to reason/ will not listen to reason/ out of all reason/ impervious to reason

【不可磨灭】bù kě mó miè

can never be erased/ will endure for centuries/ indelible/ineffaceable

【不可偏废】bù kě piān fèi

without neglecting either

【不可企及】bù kě qī jí

unable to catch up with/ far beyond one's reach/ out of(or above)one's reach/ lag far behind

【不可胜数】bù kě shèng shǔ

beyond counting/ beyond compute/ countless/ innumerable

【不可收拾】bù kě shōu shí

out of hand/ irremediable/unmanageable/hopeless

【不可思议】bù kě sī yì

beyond comprehension/ beyond (or out of) one's depth/ cap the climax(or globe)/ to a miracle/ unthinkable/ mysterious/ inconceivable/ miraculous/ unimaginable

【不可同日而语】bù kě tóng rì ér yǔ

cannot be mentioned in the same breath/ not to be named on(or in)the same day with/not to be compared with(or to)/ there is no comparison between the two

【不可言状】bù kě yán zhuàng

have no words for sth/ beyond(or past)expression/ beyond description/ineffable/inenarrable/nondescript

【不可一世】bù kě yī shì

consider oneself unexcelled in the world/be insuffer-

ably arrogant/ think no small beer of oneself/ swagger like a conquering hero/ haughty airs/ overbearing/ swashbuckling

【不可逾越】bù kě yú yuè

cannot exceed the limit(or quota)/ should not go beyond the limit of/ insurmountable/ insuperable/ unbridgeable/ impassable

【不可终日】bù kě zhōng rì

be unable to carry on even for a single day/ be in a desperate situation

【不稼不穡】bù jià bù yǒu

good-for-nothing/ good-for-nought/ unpromising/ useless/ worthless

【不劳而获】bù láo ér huò

reap where one has not sown/ obtain(or get)without any labor/ gain results without working for them/ profit by other people's toil

【不了了之】bù liǎo liǎo zhī

settle a thing by leaving it unsettled/ end up in nothing definite/ leave in status quo/ conclude without conclusion

【不吝指教】bù lìn zhǐ jiào

do not refuse to offer your kind advice/ not spare your comments/ do not stint your criticism

【不露声色】bù lù shēng sè

not show one's feelings, intentions, etc. — keep a

straight face/ keep one's countenance

【不伦不类】bù lún bù lèi

neither fish nor fowl / neither rhyme nor reason /  
half-and-half/ nondescript

【不落窠臼】bù luò kē jiù

not follow the old precedent/ not fall into old ruts/  
leave the beaten track/ free from the hackneyed  
precedent/ have an original style

【不毛之地】bù máo zhī dì

land which does not grow anything/ a bare and bar-  
ren land/ barren (arid, sterile or waste) land/ barren  
(dead or poor) soil/ unfruitful ground

【不名一文】bù míng yī wén

without a penny to one's name/ penniless/ stony-  
broke

【不明不白】bù míng bù bái

with no clear reason whatever/ inexplicable/ unex-  
plainable

【不谋而合】bù móu ér hé

agree without previous consultation/ happen to coin-  
cide with/ happen to hold the same view/ be a coinci-  
dent

【不能自拔】bù néng zī bá

cannot get oneself away from/ be inescapably caught  
in/ be inextricably bogged down in

【不念旧恶】bù niàn jiù è

forget old grudges (or grievances)/ discard (or not to

dig up)old animosities/ let bygones be bygones

【不宁唯是】bù níng wéi shì

that isn't all/ not only(or just)so

【不偏不倚】bù piān bù yǐ

hold the scales even/ without bias and without favour/ without fear or favour/ fair to all/ avoid leaning to either side/ impartiality and justice/ unbiased/ impartial/ even-handed

【不平则鸣】bù píng zé míng

where there is injustice, there will be an outcry/ complaint comes when there is injustice/ man will cry out against injustice

【不破不立】bù pò bù lì

without destroying the old, one can not build the new/ no destruction, no construction/ there can be no construction without destruction

【不期而遇】bù qī ér yù

meet accidentally(or by chance)/ have a chance encounter/ come(or run)across/chance on(or upon)

【不期然而然】bù qī rán ér rán

never thought it would happen but it did(happen)/ happen without looking for/ happen unexpectedly/ turn out contrary to one's expectations/ not as one thought it would happen

【不情之请】bù qíng zhī qǐng

my presumptuous request

**【不求甚解】** bù qiú shèn jiě

not seek to understand things thoroughly/ make no efforts to understand the real meaning/ have but little understanding of the nature of things/ be content with superficial understanding

**【不屈不挠】** bù qū bù náo

persevere in (at or with) bear up under affliction/ with great fortitude/ indomitable/ dauntless/ steadfast/ unswerving/ unbending/ tenacious/ do-or-die

**【不容置喙】** bù róng zhì huì

not allow to cut in (or into)/ not allow to interrupt (one's speech)/ not allow others to butt in / brook no intervention

**【不容置疑】** bù róng zhì yí

leave no room for doubt/ beyond the shadow of a doubt/ without a shadow of doubt/ beyond (or without) doubt/ without any doubt/ undoubtedly/ incontrovertible/ unassailable

**【不入虎穴，焉得虎子】** bù rù hǔ xué, yān dé hǔ zǐ

the only way to catch tiger cubs is to go into the tiger's den — take necessary risk/ how can you catch tiger cubs without entering the tiger's lair?/ nothing venture, nothing have

**【不三不四】** bù sān bù sì

neither one thing nor the other/ (a man) of dubious character (said of a shady person, a worthless character)/ nondescript

- 【不塞不流, 不止不行】bù sè bù liú, bù zhǐ bù xíng  
there is no flowing without damming, and no motion without rest
- 【不衫不履】bù shān bù lǚ  
without shirt or shoes — be sloppily dressed
- 【不上不下】bù shàng bù xià  
suspended in mid air/ in a fix
- 【不声不响】bù shēng bù xiǎng  
without a word/ noiselessly/ silently/ stealthily/ furtively/ quiet
- 【不胜枚举】bù shèng méi jǔ  
too many to enumerate piece by piece/ cannot be enumerated one by one/ too numerous to mention individually/ defy enumeration
- 【不胜其烦】bù shèng qí fán  
be pestered beyond endurance/ too much bother/ extremely troublesome/ unable to bear
- 【不识大体】bù shí dà tǐ  
ignore the general interest/ fail to see the larger issues
- 【不识时务】bù shí shí wù  
ignorant of the present state of affairs (or of the trend)/ not familiar with the current situation/ have no proper understanding of how things stand/ show ignorance of the time/ insensible
- 【不识抬举】bù shí tái jǔ

not know how to appreciate (or treasure) favours/  
fail to appreciate sb's kindness/ do not appreciate  
such help/ not worth such help

【不时之需】bù shí zhī xū

things which may be needed any time things which  
may come in handy/ a possible period of want or  
need/ occasional needs

【不速之客】bù sù zhī kè

a guest who comes uninvited/ an unexpected (uninvit-  
ed or unlooked-for) guest/ a casual visitor/ chance  
comer (or visitor)

【不同凡响】bù tóng fán xiǎng

not of the common sort/ out of the common run/ out  
of the ordinary/ outstanding

【不痛不痒】bù tòng bù yǎng

scratching the surface/ superficial (ly)/ perfunctory/  
milk(-) and (-) water

【不为已甚】bù wéi yǐ shèn

refrain from going to extremes in meting out punish-  
ment, etc. / not be too hard on sb

【不违农时】bù wéi nóng shí

not miss the farming season/ do farm work in the  
right time

【不闻不问】bù wén bù wèn

neither care to hear nor to inquire/ pass over in si-  
lence/ turn a blind eye to/ shut one's eyes to/ show



no interest in/ be indifferent to

【不无小补】bù wú xiǎo bǔ

not be without some advantage/ be of some help

【不务空名】bù wù kōng míng

not seek after (or for) a hollow reputation (or nominal title)/ not seek empty fame

【不务正业】bù wù zhèng yè

not attend to one's proper business (or duties)/ not attend to one's own main profession/ not engage in honest work/ ignore one's proper occupation

【不相上下】bù xiāng shàng xià

more or less equal in strength (or value) equally matched/ about the same/ without much difference/ nip and tuck (or nip-and-tuck)/ neck and neck/ balanced

【不肖子孙】bù xiào zǐ sūn

unworthy descendants

【不屑一顾】bù xiè yī gù

will not condescend to look at/ not worth a single glance/ not worth taking a look at/ beneath one's notice

【不省人事】bù xǐng rén shì

fainted and lost all consciousness/ fall into a swoon/ in a dead faint/ lie like a log/ in a state of coma/ unconscious/ insensible

【不修边幅】bù xiū biān fú

not care about one's appearance/ disorder of one's attire/negligence of dress/ be slovenly/ untidy

【不学无术】bù xué wú shù

have neither learning nor skill/ not study and know nothing/ ignorant and incompetent/ an ignoramus

【不言而喻】bù yán ér yù

it goes without saying that.../ it stands to reason/ tell its own story(or tale)/ speak for itself/ self-evident/ matter-of-course

【不厌其烦】bù yàn qí fán

not mind taking all the trouble to (do sth)/ not feel annoyed to/ take great pains/ be very patient

【不厌其详】bù yàn qí xiáng

not feel annoyed(or bored)to tell (or narrate)in full detail/ dwell at great length

【不一而足】bù yī ér zú

there are certainly more than one/ it is by no means an isolated case/ similar cases are numerous

【不遗余力】bù yí yù lì

spare no efforts(or pains)to (do sth)/ be unsparing in one's efforts/ do one's utmost/ do one's level best/ go to all lengths/ leave no stone unturned/ with all one's might/ make every endeavour/ to the best of one's ability/ move heaven and earth

【不以为然】bù yǐ wéi rán

come to a different conclusion/ not think it is so/ re-

gard as wrong/ not see eye to eye with/ leave sth out of consideration/ not approve/ disapprove/ disagree

【不义之财】bù yì zhī cái

money obtained by dubious means/ ill-gotten wealth (or gains)/ the mammon of unrighteousness/ mis-gotten wealth/ filthy lucre

【不翼而飞】bù yì ér fēi

"fly without wings" — disappear/ disappear without trace/ vanish all of a sudden/ take to itself wings/ have grown wings

【不亦乐乎】bù yì lè hū

isn't it merry?/ what a joy!/ awfully (busy, etc.)

【不易之论】bù yì zhī lùn

unalterable truth/ irrefutable argument

【不由分说】bù yóu fēn shuō

without giving one the opportunity (or chance) to explain/ allow no explanation

【不由自主】bù yóu zì zhǔ

cannot control oneself/ beyond one's own control/ lose mental control/ cannot help...ing/ involuntarily

【不约而同】bù yuē ér tóng

agree (or fit) without previous consultation/ act in concert without previous arrangement/ happen to coincide/ be a coincident/ act in concert (with sb)

【不在话下】bù zài huà xià

needless to say/ out of question/ to say nothing of

**【不择手段】** bù zé shǒu duàn

use all kinds of (esp. vicious) methods/ use every means in one's power/ go to every expedient/ resort to every trick/ by fair means or foul/ by hook or by crook/ stop at nothing/ tooth and nail/ have no scruples about/ unscrupulously

**【不折不扣】** bù zhé bù kòu

without any reservation/ without the slightest discount/ in full sense/ pure and simple/ out and out/ one hundred per cent/ to the letter

**【不知凡几】** bù zhī fán jǐ

can't tell how many there are — there are numerous similar cases

**【不知好歹】** bù zhī hǎo dǎi

not to know good from bad

**【不知进退】** bù zhī jìn tuì

have no sense of propriety

**【不知人间有羞耻事】** bù zhī rén jiān yǒu xiū chǐ shì

lose all sense of shame/ be past all sense of shame/ the height of impudence

**【不知所措】** bù zhī suǒ cuò

scarcely know where (or which way) to turn (or what to do)/ be at a loss/ be all (or completely) at sea/ be all adrift/ out of one's wits/ lose (or be out of) one's bearings

**【不知所以】** bù zhī suǒ yǐ

without knowing whence (or why)/ not know the reason why/ unable to account for

【不知所云】bù zhī suǒ yún

not know what is said (or what sb is driving at)/ talk in a gibberish/ unintelligible/ incomprehensible

【不知天高地厚】bù zhī tiān gāo dì hòu

not know the immensity of heaven and earth — have an exaggerated opinion of one's abilities

【不治之症】bù zhì zhī zhèng

incurable disease/ fatal disease/ a disease without remedy

【不置可否】bù zhì kě fǒu

do not say "yes" or "no"/ refuse to comment/ not express an opinion/ be noncommittal/ hedge/ dodge

【不着边际】bù zhuó biān jì

(talk) far off the mark (or subject)/ wide of the mark/ irrelevant/ impertinent

【不足挂齿】bù zú guà chǐ

not worth mentioning/ nothing to speak of/ of no importance

【不足为凭】bù zú wéi píng

cannot be the evidence of/ not to be taken as evidence/ not prove the point

【不足为奇】bù zú wéi qí

not to be wondered at/ nothing out of the common/ nothing surprising/ not at all surprising (or strange)

**【不足为训】** bù zú wéi xùn

cannot be taken as an example (or a rule) to follow/  
not to be taken as authoritative/ not to be taken as a  
guide (or pattern)/ not worth learning from

**【步步为营】** bù bù wéi yíng

consolidate at every step/ advance gradually and en-  
trench oneself at every step/ make a stand at every  
step/ a bastion at every step/ take precautions at ev-  
ery step

**【步调一致】** bù diào yī zhì

march in step/ keep pace (or step) with/ fall into step

**【步履维艰】** bù lǚ wéi jiān

have difficulty walking/ walk with difficulty

**【步人后尘】** bù rén hòu chén

follow in sb's footsteps/ tread in the footprints of sb/  
trail along behind others/ step into someone's shoes/  
come (follow or tread) upon sb's heels/ follow in the  
wake of sb

## C

**【才高八斗】** cái gāo bā dòu

(a man) of great erudition/ have profound learning/

possess immense knowledge

【才气横溢】cái qì héng yì

brim with talent/ have superb talent

【才疏学浅】cái shū xué qiǎn

have little talent and less learning

【才子佳人】cái zǐ jiā rén

gifted scholars and beautiful ladies/ a brilliant scholar and a pretty girl

【采薪之忧】cǎi xīn zhī yōu

ill/ illness/ sickness

【残杯冷炙】cán bēi lěng zhì

remains of a meal/ a scrappy dinner/ broken victuals/ crumbs from the table/ leftovers

【残兵败将】cán bīng bài jiāng

remnants of a routed army

【残缺不全】cǎn quē bù quán

incomplete/ fragmentary

【残山剩水】cǎn shān shèng shuǐ

the remaining remnants of national territory

【残渣余孽】cán zhā yú niè

evil elements from the old society/ the dregs of the old society/ dregs and remnant evil elements/ dross and remnant evils/ dregs and leftover evils

【蚕食鲸吞】cán shí jīng tūn

nibble away like a silkworm or swallow like a whale — seize another country's territory by piecemeal en-



encroachment or wholesale annexation/ encroach on (or upon)

【惨不忍睹】cǎn bù rěn dǔ

too horrible to look at/ could not bear the sight

【惨不忍闻】cǎn bù rěn wén

too horrified to learn

【惨淡经营】cǎn dàn jīng yíng

keep (an enterprise, etc.) going by painstaking effort/ take great pains to carry on one's work under difficult circumstances/ build up a business by years of effort and persistence/ take no end of pains to do sth/ labour indefatigably at (a task)

【惨绝人寰】cǎn jué rén huán

tragic beyond compare in this human world/ extremely tragic/ most inhuman

【惨无人道】cǎn wú rén dào

inhuman/ brutal/ cruel/ barbarous

【沧海横流】cāng hǎi héng liú

the changes and disorders of the times

【沧海桑田】cāng hǎi sāng tián

seas change into mulberry fields and mulberry fields into seas — time brings great changes to the world/ the world is changing all the time (or in the course of time)

【沧海一粟】cāng hǎi yī sù

(like) a grain afloat on the vast ocean — (of man) pal-



try, compared with heaven and earth/ a drop in the ocean (or bucket)

【藏垢纳污】cáng gòu nà wū

shelter evil people and countenance evil practices/ assemble the worst elements of society/ a place infested with bad elements/ a vehicle for filth

【藏龙卧虎】cáng lóng wò hǔ

“hidden dragons and crouching tigers”—talented men still remained in concealment

【藏头露尾】cáng tóu lù wěi

secrete the head and have the tail showing (or hide the head but show the tail)—tell part of the truth but not the whole of it/ give a partial account of/ get an inkling of/ speak evasively (or equivocally)

【操之过急】cāo zhī guò jí

act with undue haste/ act precipitately or impulsively/ too hasty/ overhastiness

【草草了事】cǎo cǎo liǎo shì

finish sth roughly (or without due care)/ declare the matter closed before it is thoroughly settled/ do a thing carelessly/ get through with sth hastily/ shuffle through one's work/ do sth in a perfunctory manner

【草菅人命】cǎo jiān rén mìng

treat human life as (no more than) grass/ act with utter disregard for human life/ have complete disregard for human life



**【草木皆兵】** cǎo mù jiē bīng

every bush and tree looks like an enemy soldier — a state of extreme nervousness/ be afraid of one's own shadow

**【側目而視】** cè mù ér shì

look askance at sb (with fear or indignation)/ take a sidelong glance at/ squint at

**【参差不齐】** cēn cī bù qí

uneven/ not uniform

**【層出不窮】** céng chū bù qióng

(of good deeds) spring up one after another/ emerge in an endless stream

**【曾几何时】** céng jǐ hé shí

only a short while ago/before long/ not long after/ it was not long before...

**【差强人意】** chā qiáng rén yì

barely (or fairly) satisfactory/ just passable

**【差之毫厘，谬以千里】** chā zhī háo lí, miù yǐ qiān lǐ

the discrepancy of a single hair will lead to an error of a thousand *li*/ the slightest divergence leads far astray/ a small discrepancy leads to a great error/ one false move may lose the game

**【插翅难飞】** chā chì nán fēi

unable to escape even if given wings/ even sticking on wings will not help one escape

**【插科打诨】** chā kē dǎ hùn

(of an actor) make impromptu comic gestures and remarks/jesting/ buffoonery

【查无实据】chá wú shí jù

investigation reveals no evidence (against the suspect)

【茶余饭后】chá yú fàn hòu

over a cup of tea or after dinner — at one's leisure

【察言观色】chá yán guān sè

examine a man's words and observe his countenance  
— measure his attention/ carefully weigh up a  
person's words and closely watch his expression —  
watch a person's every mood

【豺狼成性】chái láng chéng xìng

rapacious and ruthless/ wolfish (in nature)

【豺狼当道】chái láng dāng dào

wolves stop the road — said of evil men usurping authority/  
a wolf stands astride road/ jackals and  
wolves hold sway/ bad person in power

【馋涎欲滴】chán xián yù dī

mouth drooling with greed/ make one's mouth water

【谄上欺下】chǎn shàng qī xià

be servile to one's superiors and tyrannical to one's  
subordinates/ fawn on those above and bully those  
below/ snobbish

【长此以往】cháng cǐ yǐ wǎng

if things go on like this/ if things continue this way/  
if always going on like this



【长年累月】cháng nián lěi yuè

(for) months and years/ year in year out/ over the years

【长篇大论】cháng piān dà lùn

a ponderous thesis/ a lengthy speech (or article)/ longwindedness

【长驱直入】cháng qū zhí rù

drive straight in (or into)/ drive deep into

【长吁短叹】cháng xū duǎn tàn

deep groans (or sighs)/ sigh incessantly (or deeply)/ moan and groan/ whine

【常备不懈】cháng bèi bù xiè

always be on the alert/ be ever prepared (against war)/ all-time preparedness against war

【畅所欲言】cháng suǒ yù yán

say exactly as the mind dictates/ speak without any inhibitions/ speak one's mind freely (or without reticence)/ express with zest and gusto/ speak out freely/ have one's say/ say (out) one's say/ empty the bag

【唱独角戏】chàng dú jiǎo xì

put on a one-man show/ go it alone

【唱对台戏】chàng duì tái xì

set up a rival stage in opposition to/ put on a rival show/ enter into rivalry

【超凡越圣】chāo fán yuè shèng

above the average and overtake the sages — of abstruse and profound attainment

【超尘拔俗】chāo chén bá sù

above this mortal life and overtopping the man's world — a well-cultivated mind/ above the average

【超群绝伦】chāo qún jué lún

far surpassing one's fellows/ cut (or make) a conspicuous (good or great) figure/ preeminent

【超然物外】chāo rán wù wài

hold (keep, stand or remain) aloof from (the world)/ be above worldly considerations/ stay away from the scene of contention/ keep out of

【车到山前必有路】chē dào shān qián bì yǒu lù

the cart will find its way round the hill when it gets there — things will eventually sort themselves out/ in the end things will mend

【车水马龙】chē shuǐ mǎ lóng

an incessant stream of horses and carriages — heavy traffic

【车载斗量】chē zài dòu liáng

enough to fill carts and be measured by bushels/ common and numerous/ immense quantities/ plentiful

【彻头彻尾】chè tóu chè wěi

out and out/ through and through/ every inch/ of the deepest dye/ dyed-in-the-wool/ to the backbone (or to the core)/ to the tips of one's fingers/ downright



**【陈陈相因】** chén chén xiāng yīn

keep on doing sth without any change/ follow a set routine/ follow the beaten track/ stay in the same old groove

**【陈词滥调】** chén cí làn diào

a hackneyed and stereotyped phrase (or word, expression, tune)/ worn-out lingo/ often-repeated trash/ old stuff/ hoary platitude/ truism/ cliché

**【陈规陋习】** chén guī lòu xí

out-dated (or outmoded) conventions and bad customs/ outworn customs and bad habits

**【沉默寡言】** chén mò guǎ yán

(a man) of few words/ incommunicative/ taciturn/ reticent

**【沉冤莫白】** chén yuān mò bái

suffer a grievous-wrong/ wrongs that cannot be redressed/ a deep grievance

**【趁火打劫】** chèn huǒ dǎ jié

take the advantage of a conflagration to loot—fish in troubled waters/ plunder (or loot) a burning house/ take advantage of sb's misfortune to do him harm/ go on (or upon) the scamp

**【趁热打铁】** chèn rè dǎ tiě

strike while the iron is hot/ make hay while the sun shines/ hoist (your) sail when (or while) the wind is fair/ seize (or take) time by the forelock

**【称心如意】** chèn xīn rú yì

in accord with one's wishes/ to the satisfaction of/  
have as one wishes/ to one's liking taste/ after one's  
own heart/ to one's heart's content

**【称孤道寡】** chēng gū dào guǎ

style oneself king — act like an absolute ruler

**【称王称霸】** chēng wáng chēng bà

act like an overlord/ lord it over/ play the despot/  
domineer

**【称兄道弟】** chēng xiōng dào dì

call each other brothers — be on intimate  
terms/ address each other in great familiarity/ fraternize with

**【瞠乎其后】** chēng hū qí hòu

stare helplessly at the vanishing back of the runner ahead — despair of catching up/ be left staring far behind/ fall far behind

**【瞠目结舌】** chēng mù jié shé

stare tongue-tied (or dumb-founded)/ stunned and speechless

**【成败利钝】** chéng bài lì dùn

(of an affair) will meet with success or end in failure/ success or failure/ be successful or not

**【成家立业】** chéng jiā lì yè

get married and start one's career/ stand on one's own feet

**【成龙配套】** chéng lóng pèi tào

fill in the gaps to complete a chain (of equipment, construction projects, etc. )/ link up the parts to form a whole

**【成名成家】** chéng míng chéng jiā

establish one's reputation as an authority

**【成千成万】** chéng qiān chéng wàn

thousands upon thousands/ thousands and tens of thousands/ thousands and thousands of

**【成人之美】** chéng rén zhī měi

assist others in a good object/ assist people in effecting their purpose/ aid in carrying out the good designs of others/ aid sb in doing a good deed/ help sb to fulfil his wish/ bring romance to a happy ending/ help another to success/ help sb achieve his goal

**【成仁取义】** chéng rén qǔ yì

die to preserve one's virtue intact/ die a martyr to a just cause/ die for a just cause

**【成事不足，败事有余】** chéng shì bù zú, bài shì yǒu yú

(of a person) not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things/ unable to accomplish anything but liable to spoil everything

**【诚惶诚恐】** chéng huáng chéng kǒng

with reverence and awe/ in fear and trepidation



【诚心诚意】chéng xīn chéng yì

earnestly and sincerely/ from the bottom of one's heart/ with all one's heart/ with one's whole heart/ whole-heartedly

【承上启下】chéng shàng qǐ xià

connect with the foregoing and carry forward a new paragraph/ form a connecting link between the preceding and the following (as in a piece of writing)

【承先启后】chéng xiān qǐ hòu

carry on the past heritage and open up the future (or forge ahead into the future)/ inherit the past and usher in the future/ serve as a link between past and future

【城门失火，殃及池鱼】chéng mén shī huǒ, yāng jí chí yú

a fire on city wall brings disaster to the fish in the moat—in a disturbance innocent bystanders get into trouble/ when the city catches fire, the disaster extends even to the fish in the moat—innocent people being involved in trouble

【城下之盟】chéng xià zhī méng

a treaty concluded with the enemy who have reached the city wall/ treaty signed below the city wall to avert destruction/ treaty made under coercion/ terms accepted under duress/a humiliating "treaty of peace"/ capitulate to the enemy/ accept one's terms for surrender



**【乘风破浪】** chéng fēng pò làng

ride the wind and cleave (or break) the waves/ brave the wind and the waves/ smooth and swift sailing/ ride on the wind

**【乘人之危】** chéng rén zhī wēi

take advantage of sb's precarious position/ take advantage of other's calamity

**【乘兴而来, 败兴而归】** chéng xìng ér lái, bài xìng ér guī

come on an impulse and go back with a sour face/ set out cheerfully and return disappointed

**【乘虚而入】** chéng xū ér rù

attack where the enemy is weak or unguarded/ act when sb is off guard/ get a chance to step in

**【惩前毖后】** chéng qián bì hòu

take a lesson from the past and avoid future mistakes/ learn from past mistakes and (or to) avoid future ones

**【惩一儆百】** chéng yī jǐng bǎi

make an example of sb/ punish one as warning to a hundred (or in order to warn many)

**【逞性妄为】** chěng xìng wàng wéi

act recklessly

**【吃喝玩乐】** chī hē wán lè

eat, drink and be merry — idle away one's time in pleasure-seeking

**【吃苦耐劳】** chī kǔ nài láo

hard-working and able to endure hardship/ bear hardships and stand hard work

**【吃里爬外】** chī lǐ pá wài

live off one person while secretly helping another

**【吃软不吃硬】** chī ruǎn bù chī yìng

be open to persuasion, but not to coercion/ yield to the weak but not to the strong

**【吃一堑,长一智】** chī yī qiàn, zhǎng yī zhì

a fall into the pit, a gain in your wit/ learn to one's cost/ in doing we learn

**【痴人说梦】** chī rén shuō mèng

an idiot's day-dream/ a fool's talk/ idiotic nonsense/ lunatic ravings/ tell fantastic tales/ talk fantastic nonsense

**【痴心妄想】** chī xīn wàng xiǎng

wishful thinking/ fond dream/ an idle dream/ a pipe dream

**【嗤之以鼻】** chī zhī yǐ bí

turn up one's nose at/ give a snicker (or a snort of contempt)/ make a long nose at (sb)/ thumb one's nose at (sb)/ sniff at/despise

**【魑魅魍魉】** chī mèi wǎng liǎng

all sorts of evil spirits/ demons and devils/ freaks and goblins

**【迟疑不决】** chí yí bù jué

hesitate to make a decision/ be irresolute/ be undecided

【持平之论】chí píng zhī lùn

a conciliative view (or opinion)/ a fair argument/ an unbiased view/ be fair to say

【持之以恒】chí zhī yǐ héng

persevere

【持之有故】chí zhī yǒu gù

have sufficient grounds for one's views/ hold the assertion with reasons

【踟蹰不前】chí chú bù qián

hesitate to move forward

【尺短寸长】chǐ duǎn cùn cháng

sometimes a *chi* may prove short while a *cun* may prove long — everyone has his strong and weak points/ everything has its merits and demerits/ every man is useful according to his ability

【叱咤风云】chì zhà fēng yún

commanding the wind and the clouds/ ride the whirlwind/shaking heaven and earth/ all-powerful

【赤膊上阵】chì bó shàng zhèn

go into battle stripped to the waist/ throw away all disguise/ come out into the open

【赤胆忠心】chì dǎn zhōng xīn

extreme loyalty/ a red heart of complete dedication/ utter devotion/ wholeheartedness

**【赤地千里】** chì dì qiān lǐ

a thousand *li* of barren land — a scene of utter desolation (after, drought, pests, etc.) / thousands of miles of cracked, parched and deserted land

**【赤手空拳】** chì shǒu kōng quán

with naked fists / bare-handed / empty-handed / unarmed

**【赤子之心】** chì zǐ zhī xīn

the pure heart of a new-born babe — utter innocence

**【充耳不闻】** chōng ěr bù wén

shut (or stuff) one's ears and refuse to listen / turn a deaf ear to / close (or stop) one's ears to

**【冲锋陷阵】** chōng fēng xiàn zhèn

charge and shatter enemy positions / charge the enemy lines / charge against enemy fire / charge forward / breach and storm enemy citadel / rush on the enemy and break the line / rush on the hostile ranks / press boldly forward

**【重蹈覆辙】** chóng dǎo fù zhé

get on to the route of overturned cart / follow the same old disastrous road / recommit the same error / fall into the rut

**【重见天日】** chóng jiàn tiān rì

once more see the light of day — be delivered from oppression or persecution

**【重温旧梦】** chóng wēn jiù mèng

revive an old dream / renew the old romance / relive



an old experience/ again indulge in one's pipe — dreams

【重整旗鼓】chóng zhěng qí gǔ

rally one's forces (after a defeat)/ regroup for battle (or fight)/ dig up the hatchet

【宠辱不惊】chǒng rǔ bù jīng

remain indifferent whether granted favours or subjected to humiliation/ unmoved either by favour or disgrace

【抽薪止沸】chōu xīn zhǐ fèi

take out the firewood to stop the pot boiling — take drastic measures to stop sth

【愁眉不展】chóu méi bù zhǎn

knitted eye-brows, preoccupied or sad look/ knit one's brows in despair/ with a worried frown/ with a cloud on (or upon) one's brow/ black-browed/ sullen

【愁眉苦脸】chóu méi kǔ liǎn

have a worried look/ pull a long face/ look blue/ a face of woe/ a face as long as a fiddle/ an agonized look/ blackfaced/ woebegone

【愁容满面】chóu róng mǎn miàn

look extremely worried

【稠人广座】chóu rén guǎng zuò

a dense (or large) crowd/ big gathering

【踌躇不前】chóu chú bù qián

hesitate to move forward (or to make a move)/ waver

in determination/hang back

【踌躇满志】chóu chú mǎn zhì

enormously proud of one's success/ exceedingly gratified/ puffed up with pride/ elated with success/ be self-satisfied/ smug/ complacent

【丑态百出】chǒu tài bǎi chū

act like a buffoon/ cut a contemptible figure/ utterly ridiculous

【臭不可当】chòu bù kě dāng

give off an unbearable stink

【臭名远扬】chòu míng yuǎn yáng

notorious

【臭名昭著】chòu míng zhāo zhù

notorious (or foul) reputation/ of ill (or bad) repute/ notorious/ infamous/ flagrant

【臭气熏天】chòu qì xūn tiān

stink to the skies/ reek to high heaven

【出尔反尔】chū ěr fǎn ěr

promise and then deny in succession/ go back on one's words/ contradict oneself/ blow hot and cold/ inconsistent

【出乖露丑】chū guāi lù chǒu

make an exhibition of oneself/ expose one's weak points

【出口成章】chū kǒu chéng zhāng

words flow from the mouth as from the pen of a mas-



ter/ talk with adroit phrases/ make polished impromptu speech

【出类拔萃】chū lèi bá cuì

far above the average/ stand out from one's fellows/ eminent above all others/ tower above the rest/ be out of the common run/ be distinguished from one's kind/ be among select beat/ place (or put) oneself on (or upon) record

【出没无常】chū mò wú cháng

appear and disappear unexpectedly (or without regularity)/ appear (or come and go)/unpredictably/ appear at intervals/ unpredictable in one's movement/ inconstantly

【出谋划策】chū móu huà cè

give counsel/ offer advice and suggestions/ mastermind a scheme

【出其不意】chū qí bù yì

take sb by surprise/ catch sb napping (off guard or unawares)/ have sb over the barrel/ all of a sudden

【出奇制胜】chū qí zhì shèng

defeat one's opponent by a surprise move/ win by novelty (or by surprise attack)/ catch a weasel asleep

【出人头地】chū rén tóu dì

rise head and shoulders above others/ stand out among others (or among one's fellows)/tower above others/rise from the ranks/ make one's mark

【出人意表】chū rén yì biǎo



exceeding all expectations/ beyond all expectations/  
contrary to expectations/ out of one's reckoning

【出神入化】chū shén rù huà

reach the acme of perfection/ be superb/ extremely  
miraculous

【出生入死】chū shēng rù sǐ

brave countless (or untold) dangers/ at the risk of  
one's life/ regardless of personal sacrifices/ (be)  
through thick and thin

【出头露面】chū tóu lù miàn

appear publicly (or in public)/ show one's head (or  
face)/ rise (or come up) in the world/ cut a brilliant  
figure/ given to publicity/ (be) in the limelight

【出言不逊】chū yán bù xùn

make impertinent remarks/ speak abruptly (insolently  
or impolitely)/ talk harshly/ use rude language/ say  
sth that hurts others' feelings

【初出茅庐】chū chū máo lú

just come out of one's thatched cottage — at the begin-  
ning of one's career/ just have first experience in .../  
young and inexperienced/ a new (or green) hand/ a  
green-horn/ début/sucking

【初露锋芒】chū lù fēng máng

display one's talent for the first time/ show primarily  
one's talent

【初生牛犊不怕虎】chū shēng niú dú bù pà hǔ



new-born calves make little (or are not afraid) of tigers — young people are fearless

【除暴安良】chú bào ān liáng

get rid of bullies and bring peace to good people/ suppress the evil and quiet (or pacify) the good/ weed out the wicked and let the law-abiding citizen live in peace/ drive out the rascals and protect the people

【除恶务尽】chú è wù jìn

one must be thorough in exterminating an evil/ all evils must be thoroughly done away with/ uproot (all) evils

【除旧布新】chú jiù bù xīn

eliminate (or get rid of) the old to make way for the new/ do away with the old and set up the new/ ring out the old, ring in the new

【锄强扶弱】chú qiáng fú ruò

get rid of (or do away with) the strong and help (cherish, or support) the weak/ fight for the weak to vanquish the strong

【处心积虑】chǔ xīn jī lǜ

brood over a matter for a long time/ deliberately plan (to achieve evil ends)/ incessantly scheme/ have all along nurtured schemes to/scheme and use every kind of trick

【处之泰然】chǔ zhī tài rán

take things calmly/ take things as they are (or as they come)/ take it easy/ remain unruffled/ bear (suffer-

ings) with equanimity

【触景生情】chù jǐng shēng qíng

the scene brings back memories/ the scene touches a chord in one's heart/ the circumstances excite one's feelings (as of joy or sorrow)/ memories revive at the sight of familiar places/ recall old memories at familiar sights

【触类旁通】chù lèi páng tōng

grasp a typical example and you will grasp the whole category/ single out one thing and bring out its interrelationships/ reason (or comprehend) by analogy

【触目皆是】chù mù jiē shì

can be seen everywhere/(of sth) meet the eye everywhere

【触目惊心】chù mù jīng xīn

be startled at seeing.../ be shocked to witness.../ shocking/ startling/ appalling

【川流不息】chuān liú bù xī

flowing past in an endless stream/ uninterrupted flow/ continually going on/ a continuous flow of.../ never-ending

【穿针引线】chuān zhēn yǐn xiàn

act as a go-between

【穿凿附会】chuān zuò fù huì

give strained interpretations and draw farfetched analogies/ make a farfetched (or irrelevant) compari-

son/draw a forced analogy/ stretch (wrest or strain) the sense (or meaning)/ twist one's words/ argue by quoting sth irrelevant/ a farfetched explanation

【串通一气】chuàn tōng yī qì

act in collaboration/ gang up/ collaborate with/ collude with

【创巨痛深】chuāng jù tòng shēn

severely (or sorely) wounded and in great pain — in deep distress/ badly injured and in great pain

【疮痍满目】chuāng yí mǎn mù

the wounded meet the eye everywhere — distress and suffering are seen on every side/ everywhere a scene of devastation meets the eye/ see evidence of people's distress everywhere/ wherever one looks, there is a devastation/ full eye sight of devastation

【窗明几净】chuāng míng jī jìng

bright windows and clear desks/ (of a room) clean and bright

【吹毛求疵】chuī máo qiú cī

blow aside the fur to seek for faults (or to find a blemish) — go out of the way to discover weak points/ blow upon the hair trying to discover a mole/ pick holes (or a hole) in sb's coat/ find fault with/ cavil at (or about) fault-finding/hypercritical/ nit-picking/hair-splitting

【垂手而得】chuí shǒu ér dé

drop the hands and get it — acquire a thing easily/ get

a thing without lifting a finger

【垂死挣扎】*chuí sǐ zhēng zhā*

flounder desperately before dying/ put up a last-ditch (or deathbed)struggle/ in one's death throes/ a dying kick/ last thrusts(or desperate fling)

【垂头丧气】*chuí tóu sàng qì*

hang (down)one's head/ lose one's heart(or spirits)/ bury one's head in dejection/ be in low spirits/ have one's heart in one's boots/ mope oneself/ blue about the gills/ with the tail between the legs/ look(or be) down-cast/ crestfallen/ dejected

【垂涎三尺】*chuí xián sān chǐ*

spittle three feet long — drool with envy/ one's (or the) mouth waters after (at or for) / have one's mouth made up (for sth)/ with mouth watering copiously for

【垂涎欲滴】*chuí xián yǔ dī*

bring the water to one's mouth/ make one's mouth watery/ lick one's chops/ lick(or smack)one's lips/ keep a covetous eye on

【春风化雨】*chūn fēng huà yǔ*

life-giving spring breeze and rain — salutary influence of education

【春兰秋菊】*chūn lán qiū jú*

spring orchid and autumn chrysanthemum — each in its season

【唇齿相依】*chún chǐ xiāng yī*

as closely related as the lips and the teeth/be closely related and mutually dependent/ interdependent as lips and teeth/ close interdependence

【唇枪舌剑】chún qiāng shé jiàn

cross verbal swords/ engage in a battle of words/ the thrust and parry of/ bandy words with/ repartee

【唇亡齿寒】chún wáng chǐ hán

with bared lips, the teeth feel cold — interdependence of neighboring states/ when the lips are gone the teeth will be exposed to the cold/ if one (of two interdependent things) falls, the other is in danger/ share a common lot

【鹑衣百结】chún yī bǎi jié

ragged clothes with many patches/ ragged and patched clothing/ in rags

【蠢蠢欲动】chǔn chǔn yù dòng

ready to start wriggling — ready to make trouble/ be eager (or ready) for action/ itch for action/ (of person) restless and about to start some move/ (of saboteurs or evils) be about to make mischief (or play tricks)

【绰绰有余】chuò chuò yǒu yú

more than enough to meet the needs/ more than sufficient/ enough and to spare/ aplenty

【词不达意】cí bù dá yì

the language (or words) fail to express (or convey) the idea

【此地无银三百两】cǐ dì wú yín sān bǎi liǎng

"no 300 taels of silver buried here" (the sign put up by the man in the folk tale over the place where he had hidden the money) — a guilty person gives himself away by conspicuously protesting his innocence

【此起彼伏】cǐ qǐ bǐ fú

rising here and subsiding there/ as one falls, another rises/ rise one after another/ ebb and flow/ in a wavelike fashion

【刺刺不休】cì cì bù xiū

talk incessantly/ chatter on and on/ (be) a chatterbox

【聪明才智】cōng míng cái zhì

intelligence and wisdom

【聪明反被聪明误】cōng míng fǎn bèi cōng míng wù

clever people may be victims of their own cleverness/ cleverness may overreach itself

【聪明一世，糊涂一时】cōng míng yī shì, hú tú yī shí

clever all one's life but stupid this once/ smart as a rule, but this time a fool

【从容不迫】cōng róng bù pò

with an easy self-possessed mien/ confidently and without haste/ calm and unhurried/ take things (or it) easy/ take one's time in (doing sth)/ (as) cool as cucumber/ by easy stages/ with ease/ go easy/ unhurriedly/ leisurely

【从容就义】cōng róng jiù yì

go to one's death unflinchingly/ meet one's death like a hero/ meet one's fate calmly

【从长计议】cóng cháng jì yì

give the matter further thought and discuss it later/  
take more time to consider it

【从善如流】cóng shàn rú liú

follow good advice as naturally as a river follows its course/ readily accept good advice

【粗茶淡饭】cū chá dàn fàn

coarse, homely fare—conventional apology of a host/  
plain tea and simple food/ humble (simple or homely)  
fare/ bread and water

【粗心大意】cū xīn dà yì

careless and heedless/ be careless in.../ negligent/  
carelessly/ inadvertent

【粗枝大叶】cū zhī dà yè

crude and careless (or perfunctory)/done in broad strokes or rough outline/ in a cursory fashion/ in a slipshod manner/ slapdash

【粗制滥造】cū zhì làn zào

manufacture in a rough and slipshod way/ turn out rough and slipshod work/ crudely made

【促膝谈心】cù xī tán xīn

sit side by side and talk intimately/ cross the knees and talk over matters/ have a heart-to-heart talk/ have intimate chat together



【摧枯拉朽】cuī kū lā xiǔ

(as easy as)crushing dry weeds and smashing rotten wood/ smash (the putrid forces) easily like breaking dry branches/ like breaking down a decayed stump/ sweep away all obstacles in the way/ all-powerful

【存而不论】cún ér bù lùn

leave it (or the question) open

【存亡绝续】cún wáng jué xù

survive or perish, preserve or destroy — at a most critical moment/ be upon the die/ be at stake

【寸步不离】cùn bù bù lí

not move a step from/ not let out of one's sight/ follow sb closely/ keep close to/ trail after

【寸步难行】cùn bù nán xíng

it is difficult to move a step/ cannot walk (or move) a single step/ unable to move a single inch (or step)/ find oneself (or it) hard to move a single step

【寸草不留】cùn cǎo bù liú

leave not even a blade of grass — complete devastation of land/ not even so much as a blade of grass left/ be devastated

【寸金难买寸光阴】cùn jīn nán mǎi cùn guāng yīn

“an inch of gold cannot buy an inch of time” — money can't buy time/ time is more precious than gold

【寸土必争】cùn tǔ bì zhēng

fight for every inch of land/ contest every inch of

land

【蹉跎岁月】cuō tuó suì yuè

the years roll by — spend one's life in fruitless efforts/  
let time slip by without accomplishing anything/ idle  
away one's time/daily time away

【厓火积薪】cuò huǒ jī xīn

put fire under piles of fuel (or firewood)/ great dan-  
ger remained in concealment

【措手不及】cuò shǒu bù jí

catch sb bending (napping, off guard, or on the hop)/  
be caught unawares (or unprepared)/ caught with  
one's pants down/ catch sb on the wrong foot

【措置裕如】cuò zhì yù rú

manage one's work (or the affairs) easily and leisurely

【错综复杂】cuò zōng fù zá

intricate/ complex/ complicated/ involute/ perplex-  
ing/ labyrinthine

## D

【打抱不平】dǎ bào bù píng

take up the cudgels for the injured party/ defend sb

against an injustice

【打草惊蛇】dǎ cǎo jīng shé

beat the grass and startle (or frighten away) the snake  
— act rashly and alert the enemy/ put enemy on  
guard by premature action/ frighten away thieves by  
raising a scare/ wake a sleeping wolf

【打成一片】dǎ chéng yī piàn

become one with/ identify oneself with/ merge with

【打错算盘】dǎ cuò suàn pán

miscalculate/ make a wrong decision

【打得火热】dǎ de huǒ rè

be on terms of intimacy/ fraternize with/ hobnob  
with/ chum up with/ be as thick as thieves

【打家劫舍】dǎ jiā jié shě

loot/rob/plunder

【打开窗子说亮话】dǎ kāi chuāng zǐ shuō liàng huà

frankly speaking/ let's not mince matters

【打落水狗】dǎ luò shuǐ gǒu

beat a drowning dog — completely crush a defeated  
enemy

【打破沙锅问到底】dǎ pò shā guō wèn dào dǐ

insist on getting to the bottom of the matter

【打入冷宫】dǎ rù lěng gōng

relegate to limbo/ consign to the back shelf

【打退堂鼓】dǎ tuì táng gǔ

beat a retreat/ back out/ draw in one's horns



【打肿脸充胖子】dǎ zhǒng liǎn chōng pàng zi

slap one's face until it's swollen in an effort to look imposing—puff oneself up to one's own cost/ pose as a fat man by slapping the face until it is swollen/ an impudent attempt to represent the defeat as a victory

【大材小用】dà cái xiǎo yòng

large material for small uses—misuse of material or waste of talents/ put the fine timber to petty use/ use talented people (or a talented man) for trivial tasks (or in an inferior capacity)/waste or misuse of materials or talents/ great genius in little employment/ employ a steam-engine to crack a nut

【大吵大闹】dà chǎo dà nào

kick up a row/ make a great hue and cry/ make a scene

【大吃大喝】dà chī dà hē

eat and drink extravagantly/ eat and drink to one's heart's content/extravagant eating and drinking

【大处落墨】dà chù luò mò

concentrate on the key points/ pay attention to the important points

【大处着眼，小处着手】dà chù zhuó yǎn, xiǎo chù zhuó shǒu

keep the general goal in sight and take the daily tasks in hand

【大吹大擂】dà chuī dà lèi

blow the trumpet and beat the drum vigorously/  
trumpet loudly about/ brag about/ make (or raise) a  
big (or great) fanfare about/ boast of so loudly/ make  
high-pitched loose talk

【大慈大悲】dà cí dà bēi

infinite compassion and mercy/ infinitely merciful/  
benevolent/ charitable

【大打出手】dà dǎ chū shǒu

strike violently/ attack brutally

【大刀阔斧】dà dāo kuò fǔ

deal with a matter summarily without regard to de-  
tails/ solve a problem unencumbered by minor de-  
tails/ hammer and tongs/ drastic/ audacious

【大敌当前】dà dí dāng qián

faced with powerful enemies (or a formidable foe)/  
confronted by the sworn enemies (or a formidable en-  
emy)/in the face of arch enemies

【大而无当】dà ér wú dāng

big (or large) but impractical/ unwieldy

【大发雷霆】dà fā léi tíng

raise a great thunder storm—get into a fearful rage/  
break into a furious rage/ flow into a tremendous  
passion/ pour out the vials of one's wrath on sb/  
bawl at sb angrily/ be furious with (sb at sth)/go (or  
fly) into a rage/ fly (go or slip) off the handle/ flare  
up/ an explosion of rage

【大放厥词】dà fàng jué cí



talk a lot of nonsense/ spout a stream of empty rhetoric/loosen one's tongue/ talk drivell

【大风大浪】dà fēng dà làng

wind and waves/ great (or violent) storms/ violent storms and waves

【大腹便便】dà fù pián pián

as fat as butter (or a pig)/ potbellied/ big-bellied

【大功告成】dà gōng gào chéng

(of a task, work or project) has been accomplished/ be crowned with success

【大公无私】dà gōng wú sī

just and selfless (or fair)/ without personal or selfish consideration/ not make chalk of one and cheese of the other/ unselfish/ selfless

【大海捞针】dà hǎi lāo zhēn

fish for a needle in the ocean/ search (or look) for a needle in a haystack

【大喊大叫】dà hǎn dà jiào

shout at the top of one's voice/ make a big clamour about.../conduct vigorous propaganda

【大旱望云霓】dà hàn wàng yún ní

long for a rain cloud during a drought/ look forward to relief from distress

【大惑不解】dà huò bù jiě

be extremely puzzled/ be unable to make head or tail of sth

【大惊失色】dà jīng shī sè

turn pale with fright

【大惊小怪】dà jīng xiǎo guài

be surprised or alarmed at sth perfectly normal/  
much ado about nothing/make a fuss (over sth)/ a  
storm in a teacup/ a tempest in a barrel (bucket or  
teapot)/ great alarm at a little bogey/ fussy

【大快人心】dà kuài rén xīn

(of the punishment of an evil doer)affording general  
satisfaction/ most gratifying to the people/ to the im-  
mense satisfaction of the people (or, the masses)/  
cheer the people greatly/ make the people overjoyed

【大鸣大放】dà míng dà fàng

full and frank expression of views and opinions/ free  
airing of views/ air one's views freely/ argue things  
out thoroughly

【大名鼎鼎】dà míng dīng dīng

a great reputation/ (a man) of great celebrity (or  
name)/ well-known/ famous

【大谬不然】dà miù bù rán

a gross error (or blunder)/ a serious blunder/ grossly  
mistaken/ entirely wrong

【大模大样】dà mú dà yàng

in an ostentatious manner/ with a swagger

【大逆不道】dà nì bù dào

treason and heresy/ greatest outrage/ worst offence/

D

the major crime of insubordination/ monstrous crime/impudent insubordination

【大气磅礴】dà qì páng bó

imposing and awe-inspiring/ majestic/ grand/ magnificent

【大器晚成】dà qì wǎn chéng

great vessels are long in reaching completion — talent (or great minds) mature slowly

【大权旁落】dà quán páng luò

power has fallen into the hands of others

【大杀风景】dà shā fēng jǐng

do sth to spoil one's enthusiasm/ dampen the spirit/ put a wet blanket on/ throw a wet blanket over/ a fly in the ointment

【大声疾呼】dà shēng jí hū

shout with desperation — as for help/ raise a cry of warning/ loudly appeal to the public/ cry out for/ shout(or cry)at the top of one's voice

【大失所望】dà shī suǒ wàng

greatly disappoint one's hopes/ be greatly disappointed/ to one's great disappointment

【大是大非】dà shì dà fēi

major issues of principle/ cardinal issues (or questions)of right and wrong/ right and wrong on issues of major importance

【大势所趋】dà shì suǒ qū



the trend of the times/ the general trend(of events)/  
the general course of development/ pushed(or dictat-  
ed)by the general trend of events/ as things are going  
generally

【大势已去】dà shì yǐ qù

the game is as good as lost/ not much can be done  
about it now/ one's day has gone/it is all up with

【大手大脚】dà shǒu dà jiǎo

wasteful/ extravagant

【大书特书】dà shū tè shū

record in letters of gold/ it is clearly written/ write  
volumes about

【大庭广众】dà tíng guǎng zhòng

(before) a big (or great) crowd/ (on) a public occa-  
sion/ (before) the people at large/ (in) public

【大同小异】dà tóng xiǎo yì

be the same in essentials while differing in minor  
points/ largely identical but with minor differences/  
for the most part alike(or the same)/ very much the  
same/ mostly alike except for slight differences

【大喜过望】dà xǐ guò wàng

be delighted that things are better than one expected/  
be delighted with unexpectedly good results/ be over-  
joyed

【大显身手】dà xiǎn shēn shǒu

display one's talents (or skill) to the full/ give full

play to one's abilities/ give a good account of oneself/  
fully show one's skill/ distinguish oneself/ cut a  
dashing (or brilliant) figure

【大显神通】dà xiǎn shén tōng

give full play to one's remarkable skill (or abilities)/  
show what one is capable of/ show one's magic  
power

【大相径庭】dà xiāng jìng tíng

there is a vast difference between the two/ be widely  
divergent/ far apart

【大兴土木】dà xīng tǔ mù

go in for large-scale construction

【大言不惭】dà yán bù cán

brag unblushingly/ talk big/ boast without shame/  
have the effrontery to brag/ turn geese into swans/  
insolent enough to say

【大摇大摆】dà yáo dà bǎi

an ostentatious vain manner of walking/ strutting/  
swaggering

【大义凛然】dà yì lǐn rán

inspiring awe by upholding justice

【大义灭亲】dà yì miè qīn

punish one's own relatives in the cause of justice/  
place righteousness above family loyalty/ cut off con-  
sanguinity for the sake of righteousness

【大有可为】dà yǒu kě wéi

be well worth doing/ have bright prospects

【大有人在】dà yǒu rén zài

there are plenty of such people/ such people are by no means rare

【大有作为】dà yǒu zuò wéi

there is plenty of room to develop one's talents to the full/ there is plenty of scope for one's talents/ be able to develop one's ability to the full

【大鱼吃小鱼】dà yú chī xiǎo yú

the great fish eat up the small

【大雨如注】dà yǔ rú zhù

the rain came down in sheets/ the heavy rain pours down in torrents

【大张旗鼓】dà zhāng qí gǔ

with a big display of flags and drums/ by great publicity/ give wide publicity(to)/ on a grand(or large) scale/ in a big way

【大智若愚】dà zhī ruò yú

a man of great wisdom often appears slow-witted/ the wisest man is often stupid-looking/ still waters run deep

【呆若木鸡】dāi ruò mù jī

dumb as a wooden chicken/ transfixed(with fear or amazement)/ stand like a log/ dumbstruck

【待价而沽】dài jià ér gū

wait for the right price to sell/ sell when the price

is attractive/ wait for the highest bid

【待人接物】dài rén jiē wù

the way one gets along with people

【戴罪立功】dài zuì lì gōng

atone for one's crimes by doing good deeds/ redeem oneself by good service

【单刀直入】dān dāo zhí rù

speak out without beating about the bush/ come straight to the point/ make simple and direct attack on the subject/ without preliminaries

【单枪匹马】dān qiāng pǐ mǎ

a solitary horseman—alone/go to battle single-handed/ all by oneself/ all alone

【箠食壶浆】dān sì hú jiāng

welcome (an army) with food and drink

【担惊受怕】dān jīng shòu pà

feel alarmed/ be in a state of anxiety

【胆大包天】dǎn dà bāo tiān

audacious in the extreme

【胆大妄为】dǎn dà wàng wéi

act in fool-hardy manner/ rush in where angels fear to tread/ daredevil/ reckless

【胆大心细】dǎn dà xīn xì

show courage and prudence/ bold but cautious/ brave but not reckless

【胆小如鼠】dǎn xiǎo rú shǔ

as timid as a mouse (or a hare)/as cowardly as a mouse/cannot (or dare not to) say boh to a goose/chicken-hearted

【胆颤心惊】dǎn chàn xīn jīng

strike terror into the heart of/ one's heart beats with fear/ be prostrate with fear/be terror-stricken/tremble with fright (or fear)/be all of a jump/ make one's blood curdle

【淡然处之】dàn rán chǔ zhī

treat with indifference/ take things coolly/ turn the cold shoulder on/give the cold shoulder to

【弹尽粮绝】dàn jìn liáng jué

exhaust (or run out of) ammunition and food supplies

【弹丸之地】dàn wán zhī dì

a small piece of ground/ a small bit of land/ a tiny place (or area)/a little country

【当场出彩】dāng chǎng chū cǎi

make a spectacle of oneself/ give the whole show away on the spot

【当机立断】dāng jī lì duàn

decide promptly and opportunely/make quick decision as situation demands/ decide on the moment (or on the spot)/make a prompt decision/prompt decision at the right moment

【当家作主】dāng jiā zuò zhǔ

be master in one's own house/ be the master of one's



own affairs (destiny or fate)

【当局者迷，旁观者清】 dāng jú zhě mí, páng guān zhě qīng

the spectators see the chess game better than the players/those closely involved cannot see as clearly as those outside/outstanders see more than gamesters

【当仁不让】 dāng rén bù ràng

not pass on to others what one is called upon to do/ make virtue one's burden (or obligation)/not decline to shoulder a responsibility/ take it as one's obligation to manage sth for the just cause/ take it as one's obligation to assume such authority/ in good causes do not lag behind

【当头棒喝】 dāng tóu bàng hè

a blow and a shout—a sharp (or severe) warning/give sb sharp advices to wake him up from error/arouse a person from his stupidity/ issue a strong warning/ a blow on the head

【当务之急】 dāng wù zhī jí

a pressing matter of the moment/ a task of top priority/ urgent matter/ pressing obligation

【当之无愧】 dāng zhī wú kuì

(be) worthy of the title or honour/ merit (or deserve) the reward/ be worthy of/ deserve well of/ be well qualified for

【党同伐异】 dǎng tóng fá yì

unite with those of the same ideas and punish those

who differ/ defend those who belong to one's own faction and attack those who don't/ take sides with those in the same cabal to ostracize those who hold different opinions/ side with one's copartners against those who disagree

【当耳边风】dāng ěr biān fēng

look upon it as a wind blowing past the ear—as if no importance/ let sth in(at)one ear and out(of)the other/ regard(or take)it as a matter of no concern(or a mere rumour)/ turn a deaf ear to/take(advice)like passing wind

【刀耕火种】dāo gēng huǒ zhòng

slash-and-burn cultivation

【刀光剑影】dāo guāng jiàn yǐng

the glint and flash of cold steel is already visible—(of a murderer or an evildoer)is about to act/the scene of a fierce fight

【刀山火海】dāo shān huǒ hǎi

hills of knives and seas of fire—an extremely dangerous place which is most difficult to get through/ a mountain of swords and a sea of flames/ most severe trials

【蹈常袭故】dǎo cháng xí gù

go on in the same old way/ follow mere routine/ get into a rut/ be a slave to old methods of doing things

【倒背如流】dào bèi rú liú

D

can even recite sth backwards fluently — know sth thoroughly by heart

【倒打一耙】dào dǎ yī pá

make unfounded counter-charges/ put the blame on one's victim/ recriminate

【倒果为因】dào guǒ wéi yīn

put(or take)cause for effect/ reverse cause and effect

【倒行逆施】dào xíng nì shī

go against the historical trend/ (attempt to) go against the tide of history/ turn back the wheel of history/ try to put the clock back/ set back the clock/ act in opposition to right principles/ push a reactionary policy/ perverted action

【到什么山唱什么歌】dào shén me shān chàng shén me gē

sing different songs on different mountains/ do in Rome as the Romans do

【道不拾遗,夜不闭户】dào bù shí yí, yè bù bì hù

no one picks up and pockets anything found on the road, and doors need not be locked at night — honesty prevails throughout society

【道貌岸然】dào mào àn rán

pose as a person of high morals/ assume the appearance of a man of integrity/ be sanctimonious

【道听途说】dào tīng tú shuō

market gossip/ a traveler's tale/ hearsay/ gossip/ ru-



mour/ on-dit

【得不偿失】dé bù cháng shī

the gain does not recompense for the loss/ the loss outweighs the gain/ gains cannot offset losses/ more lose, less gain/ the game is not worth the candle

【得寸进尺】dé cùn jìn chī

reach out for a yard after taking an inch/ give him an inch and he'll take an ell(a foot, a yard or a mile)/ the more one gets, the more he wants to have/ if you agree to carry the calf, they'll make you carry the cow

【得道多助,失道寡助】dé dào duō zhù, shī dào guǎ zhù

a just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little(or meagre)support/ a just cause has many helpers while an unjust cause finds few followers

【得过且过】dé guò qiě guò

muddle along (or on)/ drift along/ let well enough alone/ let things drift/ make do (with)/ be satisfied with/ make shift with

【得陇望蜀】dé lǒng wàng shǔ

covet Sichuan after capturing Gansu — have insatiable desires (or ambitions)/ having got Gansu he aspires after Sichuan/ much will have more

【得胜归来】dé shèng guī lái

return in triumph/ return with flying colours

【得天独厚】dé tiān dú hòu

be richly endowed by nature/ abound in gifts of nature/ enjoy exceptional advantages

【得心应手】dé xīn yìng shǒu

as clay in the hands of the potter/ with facility/ with high proficiency/ serviceable/ handy

【得意忘形】dé yì wàng xíng

lose all bearings in the moment of pride and satisfaction/ get dizzy with success/ have one's head turned by success/ be beside oneself with joy (or glee)/ forget oneself in one's excitement/ go wild with joy/ one's horn is exalted/ become elated/ complacent

【得鱼忘筌】dé yú wàng quán

forget the trap as soon as the fish is caught/ forget the means by which the end is attained/ forget the things of conditions which bring one success/ ungrateful

【德才兼备】dé cái jiān bèi

have both ability and political integrity/ combine ability with moral integrity/ equal stress on integrity and ability

【德高望重】dé gāo wàng zhòng

be of noble character and high prestige/ enjoy high prestige and command universal respect

【灯红酒绿】dēng hóng jiǔ lǜ

red lanterns and green wine — scene of debauchery/

bright wine banquet

【灯火辉煌】dēng huǒ huī huáng

brilliantly illuminated/ ablaze with lights

【登峰造极】dēng fēng zào jí

reach the summit — attain to perfection/ reach the peak (or acme) of perfection/ have a very high level (of scholastic attainment or technical skill)/ reach the limit

【登堂入室】dēng táng rù shì

pass through the hall into the inner chamber — reach a higher level in one's studies or become more proficient in one's profession

【等而下之】děng ér xià zhī

from that grade (or class) down/lower down

【等量齐观】děng liàng qí guān

be regarded as equal (in value or merit etc.)/ put on a par (with)/ place on the same footing/ draw a parallel between/ equate with

【等闲视之】děng xián shì zhī

regard it idly as of no importance/ regard as unimportant/ treat lightly (or casually)/ make light of/ make nothing of/ take it lightly

【低三下四】dī sān xià sì

low and menial/ lowly/ humble/ servile/ obsequious/ cringing

【低声下气】dī shēng xià qì

soft-spoken and submissive/ meek and subservient/

D

humble oneself/ eat humble pie/ obsequious

【滴水成冰】dī shuǐ chéng bīng

(so cold that) dripping water freezes/ no sooner the water drops down than freezes up/ (of weather) ice-cold/ freezing cold/ hard (or sharp) frost

【滴水穿石】dī shuǐ chuān shí

constant dropping (or dripping) wears (or will wear) away a stone/ drops of water outwear the stone/ little strokes fell great oaks

【地大物博】dì dà wù bó

(with) vast territory and rich (or abundant) resources/ a big country abounding in natural wealth

【地广人稀】dì guǎng rén xī

a scarcely (or sparsely) populated area/ a small population over a large area of land/ much land and few people

【地利人和】dì lì rén hé

have topographical advantages and enjoy popular support

【颠倒黑白】diān dǎo hēi bái

confound black and white/ confuse right and wrong/ give false account of the true facts/ prove that black is white and white black/ stand truth (or fact) on its head/ misrepresent

【颠倒是非】diān dǎo shì fēi

confound (or reverse) right and wrong/ confuse

truth and falsehood/ turn things upside down/ reversal of the truth/ turn right into wrong/ pervert the truth

【颠沛流离】diān pèi liú lí

drift from place to place — homeless and miserable/ wander about in a desperate plight/ lead a vagrant life

【颠扑不破】diān pū bù pò

(of truth or theory) stands despite time and argument/ be able to withstand heavy battering/ irrefutable/ incontrovertible/ indisputable

【颠三倒四】diān sān dǎo sì

incoherent/ disorderly/ confused

【点金成铁】diǎn jīn chéng tiě

turn gold into iron — depreciatory phrase when correcting or revising compositions for another

【点石成金】diǎn shí chéng jīn

touch a stone and turn it into gold — turn a crude essay into a literary gem/ the golden touch in writing by dexterous use of a word

【刁钻古怪】diāo zuān gǔ guài

wily and eccentric/ sly and capricious/ cunning and peculiar

【雕虫小技】diāo chóng xiǎo jì

insignificant skill (esp. in writing)/ the trifling skill of a scribe/ literary skill of no high order



【调兵遣将】diào bīng qiǎn jiàng

transfer (or move) troops/ deploy forces

【调虎离山】diào hǔ lí shān

lure the tiger out of the mountains (or his den) — lure the enemy away from his base

【掉以轻心】diào yǐ qīng xīn

lower one's guard/ treat sth lightly/ let down one's guard/ with casual attitude/ heedless

【迭床架屋】dié chuáng jià wū

pile one bed upon another or build one house on top of another — needless duplication

【喋喋不休】dié dié bù xiū

an endless stream of words/ talk endlessly/ keep on clamouring/ chatter away/ rattle away (on or along)/ talk sb's ear off/ loose one's tongue/ chatter like a magpie/ garrulously

【顶礼膜拜】dǐng lǐ mó bài

prostrate oneself before (or in worship)/ make a fetish of/ pay homage to/ make (do or pay) obeisance to

【顶天立地】dǐng tiān lì dì

upright and high-minded/ be absolutely fearless/ of gigantic stature/ of indomitable spirit

【鼎足之势】dǐng zú zhī shì

a situation of tripartite confrontation/ a situation dominated by three powerful rivals

**【丢盔弃甲】** diū kuī qì jiǎ

throw away one's helmet and coat of mail/ throw away one's shield and armour/ throw away everything in headlong flight/ fly pell-mell/ run away helter-skelter

**【丢卒保车】** diū zú bǎo jū

give up a pawn to save a chariot — sacrifice minor things to save major ones

**【东奔西跑】** dōng bēn xī pǎo

run around here and there/ bustle about/ rush about (or around)

**【东拉西扯】** dōng lā xī chě

drag in all sorts of irrelevant matters/ pull one way and drag another/ talk at random/ rambling or irrelevant talk/ ramble

**【东鳞西爪】** dōng lín xī zhǎo

here a little, there a little/ bits and pieces/ odds and ends/ fragments

**【东拼西凑】** dōng pīn xī còu

scrape together/ knock together

**【东山再起】** dōng shān zài qǐ

stage a comeback/ return to a previous stage/ get re-established (or rehabilitated)

**【东施效颦】** dōng shī xiào pín

Dong Shi, an ugly woman, knitting her eyebrows in imitation of the famous beauty Xi Shi, only to

make herself uglier — blind imitation with ludicrous effect/blindly copying others and making oneself look foolish

【东张西望】dōng zhāng xī wàng

gaze(or peer)around

【动辄得咎】dòng zhé dé jiù

be blamed for every move(or for whatever one does)/  
be frequently taken to task

【洞察一切】dòng chá yī qiè

have a keen insight into matters

【洞若观火】dòng ruò guān huǒ

see sth as clearly as a blazing fire/ clear like looking  
at fire

【洞烛其奸】dòng zhú qí jiān

see through sb's treachery (or tricks)/ know one's  
villainy fully

【斗志昂扬】dòu zhì áng yáng

one's fighting spirit soars aloft/ have fight in one/ be  
full of fight/ have high morale/ high in spirits and  
strong in morale/ be militant

【独霸一方】dú bà yī fāng

lord it over a district/ be a local despot

【独步一时】dú bù yī shí

be unequalled in one's generation/ set the pace for  
the generation

【独出心裁】dú chū xīn cái



take a course of one's own/ create new styles (or fashions)/ show originality/ be original/ ingenuity

【独当一面】dú dāng yī miàn

able to undertake the sole responsibility for one matter/ take charge of a department (or locality)/ take charge as chief (or head) of one department (or one section)

【独断专行】dú duàn zhuān xíng

come to a decision and act on one's own desire/ make arbitrary decisions and take peremptory actions/ decide alone and act at one's own will/ decide and act arbitrarily

【独夫民贼】dú fū mín zéi

autocrat and traitor to the people

【独具匠心】dú jù jiàng xīn

possessing mental strategy alone/ show ingenuity/ have originality

【独具只眼】dú jù zhī yǎn

be able to see what others cannot/ have exceptional insight

【独揽大权】dú lǎn dà quán

arrogate all powers to oneself

【独立自主】dú lì zì zhǔ

maintain independence and keep the initiative in one's own hands/ act independently and with the initiative in one's own hands/ stand on one's own feet/ on an independent basis

**【独木不成林】** dú mù bù chéng lín

one tree does not make a wood (or a forest)/ unable to do (or it cannot be done) single-handed/ one person alone cannot accomplish much/ one swallow does not make a summer

**【独木难支】** dú mù nán zhī

one log (or a single stick) cannot prop up a tottering building — individual effort cannot sustain it/ one person alone cannot save the situation

**【独善其身】** dú shàn qí shēn

pay attention to one's own moral uplift without thought of others/ attend to one's own virtue in solitude

**【独树一帜】** dú shù yī zhī

fly one's own colours — develop a school of one's own/ create a separate school (in art, etc.)

**【独一无二】** dú yī wú èr

the one and only/ the only one/ unmatched/ unique/ unrivalled/ unparalleled

**【独占鳌头】** dú zhàn áo tóu

come out first/ head the list of successful candidates/ be the champion

**【睹物思人】** dǔ wù sī rén

seeing the thing one thinks of the person — the thing reminds one of its owner

**【度日如年】** dù rì rú nián

one day seems to be as long as one year/ one day

seems like a year/ days wear on like years

【端倪可察】duān ní kě chá

have found a clue to sth/ have an inkling of the matter

【短兵相接】duǎn bīng xiāng jiē

engage in hand-to-hand fight (or in close combat)/ fight at close quarters (or range)/ fight hand to hand (or hilt to hilt)/ close combat/ cut and thrust

【短小精悍】duǎn xiǎo jīng hàn

(of a person) small, compactly built and very capable/ not of imposing stature but strong and capable/ (of a piece of writing) short and pithy/ terse and forceful

【断简残编】duàn jiǎn cán biān

incomplete parts of ancient scripts/ stray fragments of text

【断线风筝】duàn xiàn fēng zhēng

a kite with a broken string — a person or thing gone beyond recall

【断章取义】duàn zhāng qǔ yì

take (or quote) out of context/ quote a remark out of its context/ make a deliberate misinterpretation out of context/ garble a statement, etc. / a garbled quotation

【对牛弹琴】duì niú tán qín

play a lute before an ox — attempt to explain deep truths to a dull person (or choose the wrong audience)/ cast pearls before swine/ preach to deaf ears/

whistle jigs to a milestone/ talk over people's heads

【对症下药】 duì zhèng xià yào

administer medicine according to the diagnosis/ suit the remedy to the case

【顿开茅塞】 dùn kāi máo sè

the obstructing rushes at once removed—open up the mind for instruction/ be suddenly enlightened by (one's words, etc.)/ suddenly see the light/ at once become enlightened

【多才多艺】 duō cái duō yì

gifted (or talented) in many ways/ (a man) of varied attainments/ versatile/ all-round/ many-sided

【多愁善感】 duō chóu shàn gǎn

prone to illness and melancholy/sentimental/mushy/spooney

【多此一举】 duō cǐ yī jǔ

make an unnecessary move/ superfluous action/ carry coals to Newcastle/ carry (bring or send) owls to Athens/ fan the breezes/ gild refined gold/uncalled-for

【多多益善】 duō duō yì shàn

the more the better/ the more the merrier/ plenty is no plague

【多事之秋】 duō shì zhī qiū

an eventful year (or period)/ a year of many troubles/troubled times

【多行不义必自毙】duō xíng bù yì bī zì bì

if one keeps on doing unrighteous deeds, he is bound to come to ruin/ give the rogue rope enough and he will hang himself

【咄咄逼人】duō duō bī rén

with an overbearing attitude/ ferociously/ aggressive/ overbearing

【咄咄怪事】duō duō guài shì

monstrous absurdity/ out of the ordinary/ isn't it absurd that...?

## E

【阿谀逢迎】ē yú féng yíng

flatter and toady/ act the yes-man/ stoop to flattery/ pay (or make) one's court to/ lay it on with a trowel/ curry favour with/ flatter and fawn on/ butter up a person/ adulate

【恶贯满盈】è guàn mǎn yíng

have committed countless crimes and deserve to come to judgment/ face retribution for a life of crime/ the measure of (one's) iniquity is full/ one's record is replete with crimes

【恶语中伤】è yǔ zhòng shāng

use bad language to insult (or to vilify, to defame,

to malign) people/ viciously slander/calumniate

【恩将仇报】ēn jiāng chóu bào

return kindness with ingratitude (or hatred)/ requite love with hate/ return evil for good/ requite kindness with enmity/bite the hand that feeds one

【尔虞我诈】ěr yú wǒ zhà

you cheat and I deceive — mutually deceive/ mutual suspicion and deception/ each trying to cheat and outwit the other/ play each other false

【耳聪目明】ěr cōng mù míng

(of old people) have good ears and eyes/ can hear and see well/ have a thorough grasp of the situation

【耳目一新】ěr mù yī xīn

a pleasant change of atmosphere (or appearance of a place)/ find everything fresh and new/ all made new/ a refreshing change

【耳濡目染】ěr rú mù rǎn

thoroughly imbued with what has been seen and heard/ be imperceptibly influenced by what one constantly sees and hears/ coloured by what one sees and hears constantly/ get influenced without one's knowing it/ influence of surroundings

【耳食之谈】ěr shí zhī tán

hear readily without comprehending what is heard

【耳熟能详】ěr shù néng xiáng

what has been well-heard can be repeated in detail/ be very familiar with sth for having heard many

times/ often heard and well remembered

【耳提面命】ěr tí miàn mìng

pour (or din) exhortations into sb's ear/ give earnest exhortations/ earnestness in imparting instruction

【耳闻不如目见】ěr wén bù rú mù jiàn

seeing for oneself is better than hearing from others/ hearsay is not equal to observation

【耳闻目睹】ěr wén mù dǔ

what one hears and sees (personally)



## F

【发愤图强】fā fèn tú qiáng

work with a will to make the country strong/ resolve to make the country strong/ strive for national prosperity/ work hard and aim high/ rise in great vigour

【发愤忘食】fā fèn wàng shí

study with such eagerness that one forgets his food/ be so immersed in work as to forget one's meals/ immersed in hard work (or study), one forgets to eat/ in eagerness to study to forget food

【发号施令】fā hào shī lìng

issue orders (left and right)/ order people about/ order sb as one fancies/ dictate one's own terms to/ lay

off the order/ give order

【发人深省】fā rén shēn xǐng

set people thinking/ prompt one to deep thought/  
call for deep thought/ provide food for thought/  
make one wide awake/ thought-provoking

【发扬光大】fā yáng guāng dà

bring to greater height of development/ give greater  
scope to/ carry forward/ foster and enhance/ develop  
and enrich

【罚不当罪】fá bù dāng zuì

the punishment exceeded the crime/ be unduly pun-  
ished

【翻江倒海】fān jiāng dǎo hǎi

overturn the river and pour out the sea—overwhelm-  
ing/ (with) the momentum of an avalanche/ stupen-  
dous/ terrific

【翻来覆去】fān lái fù qù

toss and turn/ toss from side to side/ again and again  
over and over again/ repeatedly/ reiterate

【翻然悔悟】fān rán huǐ wù

quickly wake up to one's error/ see the error of one's  
ways and repent/ determined to make a clean break  
with one's past/ make determined effort to atone for  
past misdeeds

【翻山越岭】fān shān yuè lǐng

cross over mountain after mountain/ travel (or  
tramp) over hill and dale



**【翻天覆地】** fān tiān fù dì

"heaven and earth turning upside down" — a great and thorough change/ (as if) the universe is overthrown — a state of extreme confusion/ the whole world topsy-turvy — a tremendous change/ shake the very ground/ earth-shaking/ epoch-making/ titanic changes

**【翻箱倒柜】** fān xiāng dào guì

overturn boxes and empty chests — thorough search/ rummage through chests and cupboards/ ransack boxes and chests/ turn over things in thorough search

**【翻云覆雨】** fān yún fù yǔ

produce clouds with one turn of the hand and rain with another — given to playing tricks/ shifty

**【凡事预则立，不预则废】** fán shì yù zé lì, bù yù zé fèi

preparedness ensures success and unpreparedness spells failure

**【繁荣昌盛】** fán róng chāng shèng

thriving and prospering/ prosperous/ flourishing

**【繁文缛节】** fán wén rù jié

ritualistic (or trivial) formalities/ unnecessary and overlaborate formalities/ prolix style and hackneyed rites/official circumlocution/ red tape

**【反唇相稽】** fǎn chún xiāng jī

answer back sarcastically/ reply defiantly/ bicker with each other/ talk back/ pout in disagreement

**【反复无常】** fǎn fù wú cháng

change one's mind constantly/ blow hot and cold/  
play fast and loose/ chop and change/ changeable/  
fickle/ capricious(ly)/ chameleonic

**【反戈一击】** fǎn gē yī jī

turn one's weapon around and strike — turn against  
those one has wrongly sided with/ turn back to hit  
(those who have misled you)

**【反攻倒算】** fǎn gōng dào suàn

counterattack to settle old scores/ launch a vindictive  
counterattack/ retaliate

**【反躬自问】** fǎn gōng zì wèn

examine oneself/ examine one's conscience/ self-ex-  
amination/ self-introspection

**【反躬自省】** fǎn gōng zì xǐng

examine oneself by self-reflection/ self-introspec-  
tion

**【反客为主】** fǎn kè wéi zhǔ

reverse the positions of the host and guest/ turn from  
a guest into a host/turn(from)passivity into activity

**【反其道而行之】** fǎn qí dào ér xíng zhī

act in a diametrically opposite way/do exactly the op-  
posite/ act in opposition to/ diametrically opposed  
to/ the exact opposite of

**【反求诸己】** fǎn qiú zhū jǐ

on the contrary one turns and seeks for the cause in

himself

【返老还童】fǎn lǎo huán tóng

recover one's youthful vigour/ rejuvenate in old age/  
feel rejuvenated/ undergo rejuvenation/ a renewal of  
youthfulness

【泛泛之交】fàn fàn zhī jiāo

casual acquaintance/ a nodding acquaintance

【泛滥成灾】fàn làn chéng zāi

(of flood water) break dams and overflow/ run ram-  
pant (or wild)/ be flooded with evil (or bad) things/ be  
swamped by sth/ deluge/ inundate

【饭来张口, 衣来伸手】fàn lái zhāng kǒu, yī lái shēn  
shǒu

have only to open one's mouth to be fed and hold out  
one's hands to be dressed—lead an easy life, with ev-  
erything provided/ be waited on hand and foot

【方兴未艾】fāng xīng wèi ài

just start to grow/ (be) in the ascendant/ be just un-  
folding/ on the upgrade/ rising

【防不胜防】fáng bù shèng fáng

no way to prevent (or guard against) absolutely/ im-  
possible to defend effectively/ very hard to guard a-  
gainst

【防患未然】fáng huàn wèi rán

prevent trouble before it happens/ make provisions  
before troubles occur/ provide against possible trou-



ble/ take precautions against calamity/ take preventive measures

【防微杜渐】fáng wēi dù jiàn

destroy evils before they become apparent/ check (crush or nip) in the bud/ crush in the egg/ stifle in the cradle

【防意如城】fáng yì rú chéng

guard the thoughts of the heart as you would defend a city

【放长线, 钓大鱼】fàng cháng xiàn, diào dà yú

throw a long line to catch a big fish — adopt a long-term plan to secure sth big

【放荡不羁】fàng dàng bù jī

unconventional and unrestrained/ have (or take) one's full swing/ take (or get) the bit between the teeth (or in one's teeth)/ be easy in one's morals/ be dissolute

【放虎归山】fàng hǔ guī shān

release a tiger that might return to the hills — lay by trouble for the future/ let tiger back to the mountain — cause calamity for the future

【放任自流】fàng rèn zì liú

let things drift (or slide)/ follow one's own inclination/ laissez-faire/ noninterference/ permissive

【放下屠刀, 立地成佛】fàng xià tú dāo, lì dì chéng fó

a butcher becomes a Buddha the moment he drops his cleaver — a wrongdoer achieves salvation as soon as

he gives up evil/ lay down one's butcher knife and at once become a Buddha

【放之四海而皆准】fàng zhī sì hǎi ér jiē zhūn

(be)universally applicable/ valid everywhere

【飞蛾投火】fēi é tóu huǒ

a moth darting into a flame—bring destruction upon oneself/ seek one's own doom like moths flying into the fire/ seeking one's own doom/ make nooses for one's own neck

【飞黄腾达】fēi huáng téng dá

Fei-huang, the divine horse, is prancing—of one who has made rapid advance towards success in his career/ climb up the social ladder rapidly/ have a meteoric rise

【飞砂走石】fēi shā zǒu shí

flying sand and pebbles—a terrible storm/ a wind that carries sand and drives stone/ a sandstorm

【飞扬跋扈】fēi yáng bá hù

arrogant and domineering/be arbitrary and supercilious/ lord it over (sb)/ throw one's weight about/ domineer

【飞针走线】fēi zhēn zǒu xiàn

flying needle and running thread—do needlework very skillfully

【非驴非马】fēi lú fēi mǎ

neither ass nor horse/ neither fish nor fowl/ neither hay nor grass

**【非亲非故】** fēi qīn fēi gù

neither kinsfolks nor friends/ neither relatives nor acquaintances (or friends)/ neither kith nor kin

**【非同小可】** fēi tóng xiǎo kě

no (or not a) small (or trivial) matter/ in no ordinary degree

**【匪夷所思】** fēi yí suǒ sī

no ordinary person could think of it/ unimaginably queer/ fantastic

**【吠形吠声】** fèi xíng fèi shēng

one dog barks at a shadow, and many bark at the sound—blindly chime in with others/ when one dog barks at a shadow all the others join in—slavishly echo others

**【废寝忘食】** fèi qǐn wàng shí

lose sleep and forget to eat—the mind completely applied to study or work/ neglect one's meals and sleep/ be forgetful of one's sleep and meals/ so absorbed (or occupied) as to forget food and sleep/ be much absorbed in work or study

**【肺腑之言】** fèi fǔ zhī yán

confidential conversation/ words from the bottom of one's heart

**【费尽心机】** fèi jīn xīn jī

expend much care and thought/ take great pains to/ rack one's brains (in scheming)/ make (or have) much ado/ painstakingly

【费力不讨好】fèi lì bù tǎo hǎo

get no thanks for one's hard work/ do a hard but thankless job

【分崩离析】fēn bēng lí xī

(of a country's political or social order) disintegrating and torn by dissension/ fall (or come) apart/ fall to pieces/ disintegrate/ crumbling

【分路扬镳】fēn lù yáng biāo

part company, each going his own way/ part on journey and go separate ways/ separate and go different ways/ take different aims and go separate ways/ go by different roads/ part company with

【分门别类】fēn mén bié lèi

put into different categories/ classify

【分秒必争】fēn miǎo bì zhēng

seize every minute and second/ not a second is to be lost/ every second counts/ race against time/ outpace time

【分庭抗礼】fēn tíng kàng lǐ

meet on equal terms without ceremony/ stand up to sb as an equal/ make rival claims as an equal/ act independently and defiantly/ be received as an equal/ stand up to

【纷至沓来】fēn zhì tà lái

come in continuous crowds/ come in a continuous stream/ come thick and fast/ come in throng/ keep pouring in/(as) thick as hail

**【粉墨登场】** fěn mò dēng chǎng

make oneself up and go on stage/ don one's costume and appear on the stage/ mount the stage in full regalia/ (of an evil) go on stage in full disguise/ embark upon a political venture

**【粉身碎骨】** fěn shēn suì gǔ

die with one's body smashed to pieces/ have one's body smashed to pieces/ die the most cruel death

**【粉饰太平】** fěn shì tài píng

present false appearance (or picture) of peace and prosperity

**【奋不顾身】** fèn bù gù shēn

dash ahead regardless of one's safety/ regardless of (or without regarding) one's personal danger/ with lost body

**【奋发图强】** fèn fā tú qiáng

go all out to make the country strong/work hard for the prosperity of the country

**【奋起直追】** fèn qǐ zhí zhuī

do all one can do to catch up/ encourage oneself and hurriedly catch up with

**【愤世嫉俗】** fèn shì jí sú

detest the world and its ways/ cynical/ misanthropic

**【丰富多采】** fēng fù duō cǎi

rich and varied/ rich and colourful/ varied and colourful



**【丰功伟绩】** fēng gōng wěi jì

a great stock of merit/ great (or outstanding) services/great (or magnificent) contributions/ gigantic (or tremendous) contributions/ great achievements/ valiant records

**【丰衣足食】** fēng yī zú shí

(have) ample food and clothing/ ample clothing and sufficient food/ (be) well-fed and well-clothed/ well-provided

**【风餐露宿】** fēng cān lù sù

eat in the wind and sleep in the dew — endure the hardships of an arduous journey or fieldwork/ exposed to cold and wet (or wind and dew) on a journey/ brave wind and dew

**【风尘仆仆】** fēng chén pū pū

endure the hardships of a long journey/ be toilworn all along the journey/ be toiled through the journey/ be travelstained/ be travel-worn and weary/ hard journey

**【风驰电掣】** fēng chí diàn chè

swift as the wind and quick as lightning/ as quick as a flash/at (or with) lightning speed/flash like lightning

**【风吹草动】** fēng chuī cǎo dòng

the grass moves (or bends) when the wind blows — state of unrest/ the rustle of leaves in the wind — a sign of disturbance or trouble/ sensitive to slight upsets

**【风卷残云】** fēng juǎn cán yún

the wind blows the scattered clouds away — everything is cleared up/ a strong wind scattering the last clouds — make a clean sweep of sth/ sweep everything (or the enemy) before one like the wind rolls up the clouds/ like a whirlwind scattering wisps of clouds

**【风流人物】** fēng liú rén wù

truly great men (of their times)

**【风流云散】** fēng liú yún sàn

blown apart by the wind and scattered like clouds — (of old companions) separated and scattered/ (of relatives or friends, separated from each other) as the wind blowing and the clouds scattering

**【风马牛不相及】** fēng mǎ niú bù xiāng jí

have absolutely nothing to do with each other/ have nothing in common with/ have no relationship whatsoever with/ be totally unrelated/ two different, unrelated things

**【风靡一时】** fēng mǐ yī shí

be (all) the rage at the time/ be popular for a time/ bring into vogue/ become fashionable for a time

**【风平浪静】** fēng píng làng jìng

the wind has subsided and the waves have calmed down/ the storm abates, all is calm/ a calm and unruffled sea/ calm and tranquil

**【风起云涌】** fēng qǐ yún yǒng

like a rising wind or scudding clouds/ rolling on with full force/ spread like a storm/ tempestuous growth/ surge forward/ gain momentum/ raging

【风声鹤唳】fēng shēng hè lì

scared by the sound of the wind and the cry of cranes — a fleeing army's suspicion of danger at the slightest sound/ (get frightened on hearing) wind whistle and cranes cry — in a state of fear and turmoil/ apprehend danger in every sound/ imaginary fears

【风调雨顺】fēng tiáo yǔ shùn

good weather for the crops/ seasonable (or favourable) weather/ (a) year of good crops/ (a) year of bumper harvests

【风土人情】fēng tǔ rén qíng

local conditions and customs/ local manners and practices/ manners and customs

【风言风语】fēng yán fēng yǔ

groundless talk/ slanderous gossip

【风雨交加】fēng yǔ jiāo jiā

a storm of wind and rain/ a stormy rain/ a rainstorm

【风雨飘摇】fēng yǔ piāo yáo

swaying in the midst of a raging storm/ fluttering about in the storm/ precarious/ tottering/ unstable

【风雨同舟】fēng yǔ tóng zhōu

in the same storm-tossed boat — stand together through thick and thin



**【风雨无阻】** fēng yǔ wú zǔ

stopped by neither wind nor rain — regardless of the weather/ rain or shine

**【风云变幻】** fēng yún biàn huàn

rapid changes in the situation/ a changeable situation

**【风云人物】** fēng yún rén wù

men of the day (or hour)/ men in the news (or headlines)/ a celebrity

**【风云突变】** fēng yún tū biàn

a sudden change in the situation

**【风烛残年】** fēng zhú cán nián

old and ailing like a candle guttering in the wind

**【封官许愿】** fēng guān xǔ yuàn

offer official posts and make lavish promises/ promise high posts and other favours/ (lead sb astray by) offering (him) high posts and personal fame

**【烽火连天】** fēng huǒ lián tiān

flames of battle raging everywhere/ warclouds spread everywhere/ continuous wars

**【锋芒逼人】** fēng máng bī rén

display one's talent in an aggressive manner/ insufferably haughty

**【锋芒毕露】** fēng máng bì lù

make a showy display of one's abilities/ make oneself too remarkable

**【锋芒所向】** fēng máng suǒ xiàng

direct the spearhead against/ direct the sharp edge of  
struggle against/ direct (or focus) the attack on/ tar-  
get of attack

【逢场作戏】féng chǎng zuò xì

join in the fun on occasion/ play along on rare occa-  
sions/ find amusement when occasion arises

【逢凶化吉】féng xiōng huà jí

turn ill luck into good/ turn calamities into blessings

【凤毛麟角】fèng máo lín jiǎo

phoenix feathers and unicorn's horns — very rare  
things/ (precious and rare as) phoenix feathers and u-  
nicorn horns/ rarity of rarities/ black swan

【奉公守法】fèng gōng shǒu fǎ

be just and respect the laws/ respect justice and abide  
by the laws/ (be) law-abiding

【奉陪到底】fèng péi dào dǐ

take sb on right to the very end/ keep the enemy  
company and fight to the finish

【奉若神明】fèng ruò shén míng

worship sb (or sth)/ make a fetish of sth/ revere sth  
as sacred

【奉行故事】fèng xíng gù shì

follow old customs/ be formal

【敷衍了事】fū yǎn liǎo shì

negligently finish up a matter/ work perfunctorily  
and let things drift/ muddle through one's work/  
shuffle through one's work/ make short shrift of/

rough-and-ready/ perfunctory

【敷衍塞责】fū yǎn sè zé

perform one's duty in a perfunctory manner/ with a perfunctory gesture/ make a show of doing one's duty/ give a lick and a promise/ be half-hearted about/ lie down on the job/ perfunctorily

【扶老携幼】fú lǎo xié yòu

supporting the aged and leading the children by the hand/ supporting (or upholding) the old and carrying the young/ help the aged and the young

【扶弱抑强】fú ruò yì qiáng

restrain the powerful and help the weak/ fight for the weak against the strong/ curb the violent and support the weak

【扶危济困】fú wēi jì kùn

help the distressed and succour those in peril/ help those in distress

【扶摇直上】fú yáo zhí shàng

mount on the wings of the typhoon — of rapid success in one's career/ soar on the wings of a cyclone/ be promoted quickly in official career/ rise steeply/ a rapid rise in (price)/ skyrocket

【拂袖而去】fú xiù ér qù

leave with a flick of one's sleeve — go off in a huff/ giving a sweeping jerk with (his) sleeves, he left

【浮光掠影】fú guāng lüè yǐng

skimming over the surface/ hasty and casual/ cursory

【浮想联翩】fú xiǎng lián piān

a lot of fancies cross one's mind/ a lot of fancies gush forth as spring (or in continuous stream)/ thoughts thronging one's mind

【浮云朝露】fú yún zhāo lù

passing (or floating) clouds and morning dew — not lasting

【福无双至】fú wú shuāng zhì

blessings never come in pairs

【抚今追昔】fǔ jīn zhuī xī

recall the past and compare it with the present/ reflect on the past in the light of the present

【釜底抽薪】fǔ dǐ chōu xīn

extract (or take away) the firewood from under a cauldron — a fundamental solution/withdraw fuel from boiling cauldron/ take a drastic measure to deal with a situation

【釜底游鱼】fǔ dǐ yóu yú

the fish swimming in the pot — its pleasure is of short duration/ a fish swimming in the bottom of a cauldron — a person whose fate is sealed/ (be) near one's end/ one's doom is sealed

【俯拾即是】fǔ shí jí shì

can be found everywhere/ be extremely common

【俯首帖耳】fǔ shǒu tiē ěr

like a dog lowering its head and drooping its ears (as

at sight of the master) — servile and submissive/ obey  
(or submit) with bent head/ all obedience and servility to/ be docile and obedient/ docilely obey

【俯首听命】fǔ shǒu tīng mìng

obey orders with all due submission/ submissively  
hear and obey/ bend one's neck (to)

【俯仰由人】fǔ yǎng yóu rén

be at sb's beck and call

【俯仰之间】fǔ yǎng zhī jiān

in the twinkling of an eye/ in an instant/ in a flash

【付之东流】fù zhī dōng liú

thrown into the eastward flowing stream — all one's  
efforts wasted/ irrevocably lost/ throw to the winds/  
bury in oblivion/ leave a matter to chance

【付之一炬】fù zhī yī jù

set fire to sth/ set sth on fire/ commit to the flames

【付之一笑】fù zhī yī xiào

laugh it off/ dismiss with a laugh/ carry off with a  
laugh/ laugh at (away or out of court)

【负荆请罪】fù jīng qǐng zuì

bearing the rod and willingly taking the punishment  
— make (or offer) a humble apology/ proffer a birch  
and ask for a flogging/ make an apology for one's  
wrongdoings/ apologize

【负隅顽抗】fù yú wán kàng

(of an enemy or a robber) fight stubbornly with one's



back to the wall/ have the back to a hill and fight to the death/ put up a desperate struggle.

【负重致远】fù zhòng zhì yuǎn

carrying heavy burdens a great distance — (of a person) be able to shoulder important tasks

【附赘悬疣】fù zhuì xuán yóu

a thing of no purpose/ unneeded (or useless) things/ a thing of no use/ sth redundant and not needed

【赴汤蹈火】fù tāng dǎo huǒ

go through fire and water/ through thick and thin/ risk one's own life/ go through hell

【富贵不能淫】fù guì bù néng yín

neither riches nor honours can corrupt one (or can lead one astray)

【富国强兵】fù guó qiáng bīng

enrich the nation and increase its military power/ make one's country rich and build up its military power

【富丽堂皇】fù lì táng huáng

magnificent/ gorgeous/ splendid/ sumptuous

【腹背受敌】fù bèi shòu dí

be beset front and rear/ be attacked from all sides/ between two fires/ between the hammer and the anvil/ between the upper and nether millstone

【覆巢无完卵】fù cháo wú wán luǎn

when the nest is overturned no egg stays unbroken —

in a great disaster no one can escape unscathed/ if  
one section is defeated the whole cannot hold its  
own/ all alike involved

【覆水难收】fù shuǐ nán shōu

spilt water cannot be gathered — no help for what is  
already done/ what is done cannot be undone/ there  
is no use crying over spilt milk

## G

【改朝换代】gǎi cháo huàn dài

change of dynasty or regime/ dynastic changes

【改过自新】gǎi guò zì xīn

correct one's errors and make a fresh (or new) start/  
reform and begin one's life anew/ rectify one's life/  
mend (or amend) one's ways/ turn over a new leaf/  
start with a clean slate

【改天换地】gǎi tiān huàn dì

transform heaven and earth/ change the world/re-  
make nature

【改头换面】gǎi tóu huàn miàn

change the appearance/ dish up in a new form/  
change the outside only/ in a disguised form/ make

only superficial changes/ try to prettify/ disguise/  
camouflaged/rehashed

【改弦更张】gǎi xián gēng zhāng

tune the strings — change one's plan or policy, etc. /  
change over to new ways/ make a fresh start/ start  
afresh

【改弦易辙】gǎi xián yì zhé

tune the string and get out of the old rut — alter the  
plan, etc. / strike out on a new path/ change one's  
course/ return to right course/ make a new start/  
dance to another tune

【改邪归正】gǎi xié guī zhèng

forsake heresy and return to the right way/ forsake  
(or give up) evil ways and return to the right/ give up  
an evil way of life and reform oneself/ give up evil  
and return to good/ turn over a new leaf

【盖棺论定】gài guān lùn dìng

a man's merits or demerits can be finally judged only  
after his death/ when one's coffin is covered all dis-  
cussion about him can be settled/ final judgement can  
be passed on a person only when the lid is laid on his  
coffin

【概莫能外】gài mò néng wài

admit of no exception whatsoever/ without exception

【干净利落】gān jīng lì luò

neat and tidy/ efficient/ neatly



**【甘拜下风】** gān bài xià fēng

willingly to take an inferior position/ candidly admit defeat (in friendly competition, etc.)/ willingly acknowledge defeat/ acknowledge the corn/ lower one's sail

**【甘之如饴】** gān zhī rú yí

enjoy sth bitter as if it were malt sugar/ gladly endure hardships

**【肝胆相照】** gān dǎn xiāng zhào

show utter devotion to (a friend, etc.)/ open-heartedness/ loyal-hearted

**【肝脑涂地】** gān nǎo tú dì

the liver and brains spilt on the ground — as on the battlefield/(ready to) die the cruelest death/ be extremely loyal to

**【赶尽杀绝】** gǎn jìn shā jué

drive away and exterminate everyone/ spare none/ be ruthless

**【敢怒而不敢言】** gǎn nù ér bù gǎn yán

daring to be angry, but not daring to show it in speech/ be forced to keep one's resentment to oneself/ suppress one's rage/ choke with silent fury

**【感恩戴德】** gǎn ēn dài dé

be deeply grateful for (kindness)/ feel debt of gratitude for (some kind act)/ bear a debt of gratitude for (past kindness)

**【感激涕零】** gǎn jī tī líng

so moved to gratitude that words fail and the tears fall/ shed grateful tears/ be moved to tears (of gratitude)/ be exceedingly grateful for

**【感情用事】** gǎn qíng yòng shì

be swayed by one's emotions/ act impetuously

**【感人肺腑】** gǎn rén fèi fǔ

move people deeply/ be deeply moved (by)/ touch one's heart deeply

**【感同身受】** gǎn tóng shēn shòu

feel indebted as if it were received in person/ I shall feel grateful as a personal favour

**【刚愎自用】** gāng bì zì yòng

obstinate and self-willed/ obstinate and self-opinionated/ set in one's ways/ self-willed/ headstrong/ opinionated

**【刚正不阿】** gāng zhèng bù ē

upright and never stooping to flattery

**【纲举目张】** gāng jǔ mù zhāng

once the headrope of a fishing net is pulled up, all its meshes open/ once the key link is grasped, everything falls into place/ a lucid exposition of outline, a sharp definition of categories

**【高不成，低不就】** gāo bù chéng, dī bù jiù

be unfit for a higher post but unwilling to take a lower one/ can't have one's heart's desire but won't stoop

to less

【高不可攀】gāo bù kě pān

too high to reach/ difficult to reach/ unattainable

【高高在上】gāo gāo zài shàng

stand high above the masses/ be far removed from the masses and reality

【高歌猛进】gāo gē měng jìn

stride forward singing militant songs/ advance boldly with songs on one's lips/ advance triumphantly

【高视阔步】gāo shì kuò bù

walk with one's head held high/carry oneself proudly/prance(about)/ strut(about)

【高谈阔论】gāo tán kuò lùn

indulge in loud and empty talk/ talk volubly(or bombastically)/ talk in a lofty strain/ loud and big talk/ high-flown talk/ prate about/ harangue/ brag

【高屋建瓴】gāo wū jiàn líng

pour water off a steep roof—sweep down irresistibly from a commanding height/ operate from a strategically advantageous position/ press on irresistibly from a commanding height/ be strategically situated

【高瞻远瞩】gāo zhān yuǎn zhǔ

stand high and see far/ take a broad and long (or longterm) view/ show great foresight/ far-sighted

【高枕无忧】gāo zhěn wú yōu

shake up the pillow and have a good sleep/ sew pil-

lows under one's elbows/ sleep soundly without worry (or anxiety)/ relax one's vigilance/ sit back and relax/ rest easy

【膏粱子弟】gāo liáng zǐ dì

children from well-fed families/ good-for-nothing sons of the idle rich

【歌功颂德】gē gōng sòng dé

eulogize sb's virtues and achievements/ chant one's praises and sing of sb's virtue/ sing the praises of sb/ heap praises and eulogies on/ flattery and exaggerated praise

【歌舞升平】gē wǔ shēng píng

sing and dance to extol the good time — put on a false show of peace and prosperity/ celebrate peace singing and dancing

【革故鼎新】gé gù dǐng xīn

discard the old ways of life in favour of the new/ drop old habits and reform

【格格不入】gé gé bù rù

(of persons) cannot get along with one another/ (of things) cannot fit one another/ incompatible with/ out of tune with/ feel out of one's element/ like a square peg in a round hole/ be ill-adapted to/ be alien to

【格杀勿论】gé shā wù lùn

to slay a man who is resisting (lawful authority) will not be accounted murder/ kill on the spot with the authority of the law/ kill with lawful authority/ cap-

ture and summarily execute

【隔岸观火】gé àn guān huǒ

watch a fire on the other side of the river—showing utter unconcern/ look on at sb's trouble with indifference

【隔墙有耳】gé qiáng yǒu ěr

walls (or pitchers) have ears/ beware of eavesdroppers

【隔靴搔痒】gé xuē sāo yǎng

scratch an itch from outside the boot—attempt an ineffective solution/ fail to lay one's finger on the right spot

【各奔前程】gè bèn qián chéng

each pursues his onward journey (or his own course)/ each goes his own way

【各持己见】gè chí jǐ jiàn

each cleaves to his own opinion/ each sticks (or holds fast) to his own view

【各得其所】gè dé qí suǒ

each is in his proper place/ each is properly provided for/ each has a role to play/ each gets his due/ to the satisfaction of one and all

【各个击破】gè gè jī pò

destroy (crush, defeat or knock out) one by one/ rout (the enemy forces) one by one

【各人自扫门前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜】gè rén zì sǎo mén

qián xuě, mò guǎn tā rén wǎ shàng shuāng



each one sweeps the snow from his own doorsteps  
and doesn't bother about the frost on his neighbour's  
roof—individualism or departmental selfishness/ give  
your own fish-guts to your own sea-maws/ mind  
one's own business

【各抒己见】gè shū jǐ jiàn

each airs his own views/ each has (or says) his say

【各行其是】gè xíng qí shì

each does what he thinks is right/ each goes his own  
way/ act as one pleases

【各有千秋】gè yǒu qiān qiū

each has his (or it's) own merits/ each has something  
to recommend him/ each has his strong points

【各执一词】gè zhí yī cí

each sticks to his own version or argument

【各自为政】gè zì wéi zhèng

each does things in his own way

【根深蒂固】gēn shēn dì gù

the root is deep and the branches strong/ have a firm  
foundation/ become deeply ingrained in/ deeply root-  
ed/ ingrained/ inveterate

【亘古未有】gèn gǔ wèi yǒu

there has never been any from time immemorial down  
to the present day/ break all previous records/ un-  
precedented

【更深入静】gēng shēn rén jìng

all is quiet at the dead of night

【纒短汲深】gěng duǎn jí shēn

if the rope is short, it cannot reach the deep water —  
it's beyond one whose ability is limited

【更上一层楼】gèng shàng yī céng lóu

climb one storey higher/ attain a yet higher goal/  
scale new heights

【工力悉敌】gōng lì xī dí

the workmanship of each vies with the other/ the ar-  
tistical attainments of both are well-matched

【公报私仇】gōng bào sī chóu

avenge a personal wrong in the name of public inter-  
ests/ abuse public power to retaliate on a personal  
enemy

【公而忘私】gōng ér wàng sī

forget selfish (or personal) considerations in the inter-  
ests of the public/ so devoted to public service as to  
forget one's own interests/ selfless

【公事公办】gōng shì gōng bàn

do official business according to official principles/  
not let personal considerations interfere with one's  
execution of public duty/ business is business

【公说公有理，婆说婆有理】gōng shuō gōng yǒu lǐ, pó  
shuō pó yǒu lǐ

each says he is right/ both parties claim to be in the  
right

【公诸同好】gōng zhū tóng hào

share enjoyment with those of the same taste/ let others with same taste share (artistic or creative work)

【功败垂成】gōng bài chuí chéng

fail when success is already in sight/ fail in a great undertaking on the verge of success/ suffer defeat when victory is within one's grasp

【功到自然成】gōng dào zì rán chéng

constant effort yields sure success

【功德无量】gōng dé wú liàng

a great service to mankind/ boundless beneficence

【功亏一篑】gōng kuī yī kuì

fail to build a mound for want of one final basket of earth—fall short of success for lack of a final effort/ fall short of success at the last stage/ just one step short of success or completion

【攻城略地】gōng chéng lüè dì

take cities by force and seize land by assault/ take cities and seize territory

【攻其无备】gōng qí wú bèi

strike where or when the enemy is unprepared/ take advantage of sb's unpreparedness/ take the enemy at a disadvantage/ take sb by surprise/ catch sb un-awares/ catch a weasel asleep

【攻守同盟】gōng shǒu tóng méng

offensive and defensive alliance/ military alliance

(for mutual defense)/ an agreement between partners in crime not to give each other away/ a pact to shield each other

【攻无不克(战无不胜)】 gōng wú bù kè (zhàn wú bù shèng)

all-conquering and invincible/ ever-victorious

【供不应求】 gōng bù yīng qiú

the supply is inadequate to meet the demand/ supply falls short of demand/ supply fails to meet the demand/ demand exceeds supply

【钩心斗角】 gōu xīn dòu jiǎo

intrigue (or scheme) against each other/ jockey for position

【苟且偷安】 gǒu qiě tōu ān

be content with temporary ease and comfort/ seek momentary ease/ seek ease and comfort at the expense of principles

【苟延残喘】 gǒu yán cán chuǎn

drag out one's feeble existence/ linger out a feeble existence/ linger on in a steadily worsening condition/ eke out a meagre life/ keep body and soul together/ be on one's last legs

【狗急跳墙】 gǒu jí tiào qiáng

a cornered beast will do sth desperate/ (just) like a cornered dog going mad/ (of evils) will take desperate measures if pushed to the wall/ despair gives courage to a coward

【狗尾续貂】 gǒu wěi xù diāo

join a dog's tail to sable—incongruous/ like patching up a sable coat with a dog's tail/ a wretched sequel to fine work/ write a deplorable sequel to a master-piece

【狗血喷头】 gǒu xuè pēn tóu

let loose a stream of abuse(against sb)/ pour out a flood of invective(against sb)

【狗眼看人低】 gǒu yǎn kàn rén dī

be damned snobbish/ act like a snob

【狗仗人势】 gǒu zhàng rén shì

like a dog threatening people on the strength of its master's power—be a bully under the protection of a powerful person/ a dog bites on strength of its master's position/ (of evils)bully others on the evil force

【狗嘴里吐不出象牙】 gǒu zuǐ lǐ tǔ bù chū xiàng yá

a dog's mouth emits no ivory/ what can you expect from a hog but a grunt?/ no ivory will come of a dog's mouth/ a filthy mouth can't utter decent language/ a cracked bell can never sound well

【沽名钓誉】 gū míng diào yù

devise one's personal fame(or reputation)by unjust means/ fish for fame and reputation/ court(or seek) publicity/ angle for praise

【姑妄听之】 gū wàng tīng zhī

see no harm in hearing what sb has to say/ just let him talk and let's just listen

【姑妄言之】gū wàng yán zhī

tell sb sth for what it's worth

【姑息养奸】gū xī yǎng jiān

ever-indulgence nourishes evil/ to tolerate evil is to abet it/ toleration (or to be tolerant) tends to breed traitors/ foster evil propensities by being over lenient

【孤芳自赏】gū fāng zì shǎng

a solitary flower in love with its own fragrance/ a lone soul admiring his own purity/ think oneself as being pure and elevated/ indulge in self-admiration/ spurning publicity/ narcissistic

【孤家寡人】gū jiā guǒ rén

a person in solitary splendour/ a person who has no mass support/ a man without followers/ be in the difficult position of being totally isolated/ a loner

【孤军奋战】gū jūn fèn zhàn

fight in isolation

【孤苦伶仃】gū kǔ líng dīng

orphaned and helpless/ (be) alone and helpless/ friendless and wretched/ sad and lonely

【孤立无援】gū lì wú yuán

isolated and without (or cut off from) help/ stand without support/ left high and dry

【孤陋寡闻】gū lòu guǒ wén

poorly read and ignorant/ ignorant and ill-informed/  
solitary and inexperienced

【孤行己见】gū xíng jǐ jiàn

follow one's own bigoted course

【孤掌难鸣】gū zhǎng nán míng

one palm cannot clap and make a sound — cannot do  
without assistance/ you can't clap with one hand/ it's  
impossible to clap with one hand/ it's difficult to  
achieve anything without support/ he who stands  
alone has no power/ a weak minority

【孤注一掷】gū zhù yī zhì

stake everything on a single throw/ stake everything  
on a single cast of the dice/ bet one's bottom(or last)  
dollar on sth/ put all one's eggs in one basket/ win  
the mare or lose the halter/ it's hit or miss/ neck-or-  
nothing/ sink or swim

【古今中外】gū jīn zhōng wài

both ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign/ past  
and present, at home and abroad/ at all times and in  
all countries

【古色古香】gǔ sè gǔ xiāng

(of ancient objects of art) having antique flavor/ clas-  
sic beauty/ antique/ quaint/ patinated

【古往今来】gǔ wǎng jīn lái

through the ages/ of all ages/since time immemorial/  
past and present/ from ancient times till now

【古为今用(洋为中用)】gǔ wéi jīn yòng (yáng wéi

zhōng yòng)

make the past serve the present (and foreign things serve China)

【骨鲠在喉】gǔ gěng zài hóu

feel as if one has a fishbone in one's throat and cannot rest until one has spat it out — have an opinion one cannot suppress

【骨肉相连】gǔ ròu xiāng lián

as closely linked as flesh and blood/ inseparable from each other like flesh and blood/ of one's own flesh and blood/ kith and kin/ blood relationship

【骨瘦如柴】gǔ shòu rú chái

thin and emaciated like a stick/ be reduced to a mere skeleton/ be all skin and bone/ lean as a lath (or as a rake or as a whipping post)/ worn to a shadow/ a bag of bones

【蛊惑人心】gǔ huò rén xīn

confuse and poison people's minds/ instil poisonous suspicions into men's minds blind the minds of the people/ beguile people out of the right way/ resort to demagoguery/ blatantly and demagogically

【鼓足干劲】gǔ zú gàn jìn

go all out/ be all out

【固若金汤】gù ruò jīn tāng

be secure against assault/ strongly fortified/ impregnable

【固执己见】gù zhí jǐ jiàn



stick (or hold fast) to one's own view/ stubbornly adhere to one's own opinions/ abide by one's own opinion/ unduly attached to one's own opinions/ wedded to an opinion/ follow one's bigoted course/ self-opinionated/ self-willed

【故步自封】gù bù zì fēng

stand still and refuse to make progress/ do not want to move a step forward/ limit one's own progress/ be complacent and conservative/ ultraconservative and self-satisfied

【故伎重演】gù jì chóng yǎn

play the same old trick/ repetition of the old dodge/ up to one's old tricks

【故弄玄虚】gù nòng xuán xū

deliberately (or purposely) turn simple things into mysteries/ make things look unnecessarily mysterious/ be deliberately mystifying/ make a mystery of sth/cast (or throw) a mist before sb's eyes

【故态复萌】gù tài fù méng

slip back into one's old ways/the old vice has come upon sb again/ one's old manners restored/ revert one's old way of life/go back to one's old way of doing.../relapse

【顾此失彼】gù cǐ shī bǐ

take one into consideration to the neglect of the other/ attend to one thing and lose sight of another/ unable to attend to everything at once/ unable to hit one

without losing hold of the other/ be put in a double squeeze

【顾虑重重】gù lǜ chóng chóng

be full of worries/ have no end of misgivings

【顾名思义】gù míng sī yì

seeing the name of a thing one thinks of its function/  
think what a title or name should imply/ just as its  
name implies/ as the term suggests

【顾盼自雄】gù pàn zì xióng

look about (or gaze around) complacently

【顾前不顾后】gù qián bù gù hòu

drive ahead without considering the consequences/  
act rashly

【顾全大局】gù quán dà jú

give due consideration to the over-all situation/ take  
the interests of the whole into account/ take the situ-  
ation as a whole into consideration/ for the sake of  
the larger interest

【顾影自怜】gù yǐng zì lián

look at one's reflection and admire oneself/ look at  
one's shadow and lament one's lot/ look back at one's  
own shadow and pity oneself

【瓜熟蒂落】guā shú dì luò

when a melon is ripe it falls off its stem — things will  
be easily settled when conditions are ripe/ at the  
right time things are easily managed

## 【瓜田李下】guā tián lǐ xià

don't tie your shoes in a melon-patch or adjust your hat under a plum tree — avoid being suspected/ be found in a suspicious position

## 【刮目相待】guā mù xiāng dài

look at sb with new eyes/ treat sb with increased respect/ have completely new appraisal of sb/ regard sb with special esteem

## 【寡不敌众】guǎ bù dí zhòng

the few cannot withstand the many/ a few are no match for the many/(be) hopelessly outnumbered

## 【寡见少闻】guǎ jiàn shǎo wén

little read and uninformed (or ill-informed)/ have only limited knowledge

## 【寡廉鲜耻】guǎ lián xiǎn chǐ

lost to shame/ shameless/ brazen-faced

## 【挂羊头，卖狗肉】guà yáng tóu, mài gǒu ròu

hang up a sheep's head and sell dogmeat — try to palm off sth inferior to what it purports to be/ sell the dogmeat under the label of the sheep's head/ selling horse-meat as beef steak/ carry high-sounding but misleading names

## 【挂一漏万】guà yī lòu wàn

for one thing cited, ten thousand may have been left out — the list is far from complete/ record one item while leaving out ten thousand

【拐弯抹角】guǎi wān mò jiǎo

talk in a roundabout way/ beat about the bush

【怪诞不经】guài dàn bù jīng

sth entirely out of the common/weird and uncanny/  
fantastic

【怪里怪气】guài lì guài qì

eccentric/ peculiar/ queer

【怪模怪样】guài mú guài yàng

queer-looking/ grotesque

【怪声怪气】guài shēng guài qì

(speak in a)strange voice or affected manner

【关怀备至】guān huái bèi zhì

show sb every consideration/ show the utmost solicitude

【官逼民反】guān bī mín fǎn

the ruler's persecution drives (or forces) the people to rebel/ tread on a worm and it will turn

【官官相护】guān guān xiāng hù

bureaucrats shield each other (or one another)/ officials shield one another/ one official will protect another

【官样文章】guān yàng wén zhāng

official formalities/ red tape/ a mere scrap of official paper/ mere formalities/ officialese

【冠冕堂皇】guān miǎn táng huáng

dignified in form but insincere in substance/ having

official elegance/ impressive looking/ high-sounding/  
high-flown/ ostentatious

【鰥寡孤独】guān guǒ gū dú

widowers, widows, orphans and the childless — those  
who have no kith and kin and cannot support them-  
selves

【管见所及】guǎn jiàn suǒ jí

one's humble opinion (or view)/ one's limited under-  
standing

【管窺蠡測】guǎn kuī lí cè

look at the sky through a bamboo tube and measure  
the sea with a conchshell — restricted in vision and  
shallow in understanding/ take a narrow view of  
things

【管中窺豹，可見一斑】guǎn zhōng kuī bào, kě jiàn yī  
bān

look at one spot on a leopard and you can visualize  
the whole animal/ conjure the whole thing through  
seeing a part of it/ from the claw we may infer the li-  
on/ from the foot we may judge of Hercules

【光彩夺目】guāng cǎi duó mù

so bright that it dazzles the eye/ shine with dazzling  
brilliance/ dazzlingly radiant (or brilliant)

【光復旧物】guāng fù jiù wù

recover lost territory

【光怪陆离】guāng guài lù lí

grotesque in shape and gaudy in colour/ grotesque (or fantastic) and diversified/ bizarre and motley/ fantastic and varicoloured

【光芒万丈】guāng máng wàn zhàng

shining with boundless radiance/ gloriously radiant (or shining)/ resplendent/ brilliant

【光明磊落】guāng míng lěi luò

views completely open/ frank and forthright/ open and aboveboard/ on the up-and-up

【光明正大】guāng míng zhèng dà

just and open (or honourable)/ upright and pure-minded/ frank and righteous/ open and aboveboard/ fair and square

【光天化日】guāng tiān huà rì

(in) broad daylight/(in) the face of day (or of the sun)/(expose sth to or bring out sth into) the light of the day

【光阴似箭】guāng yīn sì jiàn

time flies like an arrow/ how time flies

【光宗耀祖】guāng zōng yào zǔ

bring honor to (or reflect glory on) one's ancestors/ make one's ancestors illustrious

【广开言路】guǎng kāi yán lù

encourage the free airing of views

【归根结蒂】guī gēn jié dì

in the final (or last) analysis/ in the long run/ come

(or get) down to bedrock/boil down to/ get to the root of the problem/ in the end/ after all/ finally

【归心似箭】guī xīn sì jiǎn

a mind bent on returning is like an arrow/ with one's heart set on speeding home/ impatient to get back/ (be) anxious to return

【规矩准绳】guī jǔ zhǔn shéng

compass, square, level and plumb-line — exact/ fixed laws

【规行矩步】guī xíng jǔ bù

(be) guided by rule in every act and movement — strictly upright and correct/ behave correctly and cautiously/ stick to established practice/ follow the beaten track

【诡计多端】guǐ jì duō duān

full of schemes and tricks/ have the whole bag of tricks/ be very crafty/ be up to all dodges/ (as) tricky as a monkey/ trickish/ wiliness

【鬼鬼祟祟】guǐ guǐ suì suì

sneaking/ furtive/ stealthy/ surreptitious

【鬼哭狼嚎】guǐ kū láng háo

wail like ghosts and howl like wolves/ set up wild shrieks and howls/ terrifying cries

【鬼使神差】guǐ shǐ shén chāi

doings of ghosts and gods — unexpected happenings/ at the behest of supernatural powers/ a curious coincidence

**【鬼蜮伎俩】** guǐ yù jì liǎng

devilish stratagem/ evil tactics/ malicious intrigues/  
underhanded tricks

**【滚瓜烂熟】** gǔn guā làn shú

(recite, etc.) fluently/ (know or have sth) pat/ have  
sth at one's finger tips (or finger-ends)

**【国计民生】** guó jì mǐn shēng

national welfare and people's livelihood/ national e-  
conomy and the people's livelihood

**【裹足不前】** guǒ zú bù qián

hesitate to proceed (or to move forward)/ hang a leg/  
come to a standstill

**【过河拆桥】** guò hé chāi qiáo

break (or remove) the bridge after crossing the river—  
ingratitude for past help/ drop one's benefactor as  
soon as his help is not required (or is no more  
needed)/ kick down the ladder/ cut down the tree  
that once gave him shadow

**【过目成诵】** guò mù chéng sòng

be able to recite a passage after one perusal/ be able  
to recite sth after reading it over once/ have a photo-  
graphic (or very retentive) memory

**【过甚其词】** guò shèn qí cí

give an exaggerated account overstate the case/ strain  
(or stretch) the truth/ paint the devil blacker than he  
is/ exaggerated/ bombastic



【过屠门而大嚼】guò tú mén ér dà jiáo

pass the butcher's and start munching — feed oneself on illusions

【过为已甚】guò wéi yǐ shèn

overdo a thing/ overstep the limits/ (of actions) you have gone too far/ carry things too far/ it (or that) is a bit (rather or a little too) thick/ cut it too fat

【过眼云烟】guò yǎn yún yān

as transient as a fleeting cloud

【过犹不及】guò yóu bù jí

to go beyond is as wrong as to fall short/ going too far is as bad as not going far enough/ the half is more than the whole/ too much water drowned the miller

## H

【海底捞月】hǎi dǐ lāo yuè

try to fish out the moon from the bottom of the sea — strive for the impossible or illusory/ fishing for the moon in the sea

【海底捞针】hǎi dǐ lāo zhēn

fish up a needle from the bottom of the sea — impossible task/ look for a needle in a haystack

【海枯石烂】hǎi kū shí làn

when the seas dry up and the rocks decay—an oath of  
unchanging fidelity/ (even if) the seas run dry and  
the rocks crumble/ for ever and a day/ for ever and  
ever/ forevermore

【海阔天空】hǎi kuò tiān kōng

as boundless as the sea and sky/ in open sea and sky/  
talk at random (or without reference to reality)/ un-  
restrained and far-ranging

【海誓山盟】hǎi shì shān méng

lovers' pledge of eternal loyalty (until the seas dry up  
and rocks decay)/ (make) a solemn pledge (or oath) of  
love/ pledge of eternal love/ lovers' vows

【海市蜃楼】hǎi shì shēn lóu

strange and unreal appearance/ the shadow of a  
shade/ castle in the air/ castle in Spain/ mirage/  
imaginary

【海外奇谈】hǎi wài qí tán

a strange story from beyond (or over) the seas/ a fan-  
tastic (or curious) tale/ a tall story/ a traveller's tale/  
a long yarn

【骇人听闻】hài rén tīng wén

be startled at hearing (the news)/ be astound at (the  
news)/ shocking/ appalling/ horrifying/ astounding/  
hideous

【害群之马】hài qún zhī mǎ

a horse that injures the mob—one who acts in a way  
detrimental to public welfare/ an evil member of the  
herd/ one who brings disgrace on his group/ a black

sheep

【邯郸学步】hán dān xué bù

slavishly imitate others and lose one's own originality/  
lose one's own individuality in imitating others/  
following others and losing one's own originality/ in  
attempting to walk like a swan, the crow loses its  
own gait

【含垢忍辱】hán gòu rěn rǔ

endure contempt and insults/ bear shame and humili-  
ation/ bear insult and obloquy with patience/ eat dirt  
(or the humble pie)

【含糊其辞】hán hú qí cí

talk ambiguously (or indistinctly)/ mention vaguely/  
in vague terms/ amphibolously/ equivocated

【含沙射影】hán shā shè yǐng

attack by innuendo/ make insinuations/ with insidi-  
ous language/ fling dirt about/ insinuation

【含辛茹苦】hán xīn rú kǔ

drink the bitter cup/ endure all kinds of hardships/  
put up with hardships

【含血喷人】hán xuè pēn rén

hold blood in the mouth and spurt it at others — mali-  
cious words to injure another/ make slanderous accu-  
sations/ make scurrilous attacks on sb

【寒来暑往】hán lái shǔ wǎng

as summer goes and winter comes/ with the passage

of time

【喊冤叫屈】hǎn yuān jiào qū

cry out about one's grievances/ complain loudly about an alleged injustice

【汗流浹背】hàn liú jiǎ bèi

streaming with sweat (from fear or physical exertion)/ sweat (or perspire) all over/ all of a sweat/ sweat like a pig

【汗马功劳】hàn mǎ gōng láo

achievements in war/ merit (or worthy service) in battle/ toil and hardship in the war/ war exploits/ make achievements (or contributions) in one's work

【汗牛充栋】hàn niú chōng dòng

(of multitude of books) so many as to make the ox carrying them perspire and to fill a house to the rafters—an immense number of books

【悍然不顾】hàn rán bù gù

fly in the teeth of/ rudely brush aside/ in flagrant defiance of

【行行出状元】háng háng chū zhuāng yuán

there is not a field in which one can't distinguish himself/ one can make sth of himself in his own trade (or profession)/ every profession produces its own leading authority/ every trade has its master

【沆瀣一气】hàng xiè yī qì

act in collusion with/ wallow in the mire with/ (people) of the same ilk/ like attracts like

【毫不在乎】háo bù zài hū

do not care a dime (a snap, a curse, a cuss or a far-thing)

【毫厘不爽】háo lí bù shuǎng

not the least loss (or error)/ without the slightest error (or a shade of difference)/ just right

【毫无二致】háo wú èr zhì

exactly (or just) the same/ without the least (or slightest) difference/ identical

【豪情壮志】háo qíng zhuàng zhì

lofty sentiments and aspirations

【豪言壮语】háo yán zhuàng yǔ

words which are full of revolutionary heroism/ brave (or proud) words/ heroic sayings

【嚎啕大哭】háo táo dà kū

cry loudly/ cry one's eyes out

【好汉不吃眼前亏】hǎo hàn bù chī yǎn qián kuī

a wise man doesn't fight against impossible odds/ a clever fellow will extricate himself from a disadvantageous position wherever possible

【好好先生】hǎo hǎo xiān shēng

one who tries not to offend anybody/ a man who is always polite and never says no/ a yesman

【好景不常】hǎo jǐng bù cháng

good times don't last long/ happy days for...are soon over/ the morning sun never lasts a day/ a sweet

dream is short-lived

【好事多磨】hǎo shì duō mó

the road to happiness is strewn with setbacks/ the course of true love never did run smooth

【好吃懶做】hào chī lǎn zuò

be fond of eating and averse to work/ be gluttonous and lazy

【好大喜功】hào dà xǐ gōng

like to do grandiose things to impress people/ have a fondness for the grandiose/ crave (for) greatness and success/ be ambitious for great achievements

【好高騖遠】hào gāo wù yuǎn

crave sth high and out of reach/ reach for what is beyond one's grasp/ aim too high/ bite off more than one can chew/ hitch one's wagon to a star

【好為人師】hào wéi rén shī

like to lecture people/ presumptuously lecture people/ talk down to

【好逸惡勞】hào yì wù láo

love ease and hate work/ dislike work and love ease/ seek after comforts and abominate labour/ hanker for (or after) living in comfort and hate labour/ eat one's head off

【浩浩蕩蕩】hào hào dòng dòng

exceedingly great/ vast and mighty/ with mighty power/ enormous and powerful

【浩然之气】hào rán zhī qì

noble spirit

【浩如烟海】hào rú yān hǎi

(of data, etc.) vast as the open sea/ tremendous amount of/ voluminous

【何乐不为】hé lè bù wéi

gladly, I don't see any reason why not/ what is there against it/ why not go ahead with it

【何其相似乃尔】hé qí xiāng sì nǎi ěr

what a striking likeness (or similarity)/ what a striking similarity there is here

【何去何从】hé qù hé cóng

(decide on) what path to follow/ what course to follow/ what should one do/ where to go

【何足挂齿】hé zú guà chǐ

not worth bothering about/ don't mention it

【河清海晏】hé qīng hǎi yàn

the Yellow River is clear and the seas are calm — perfect tranquility under heaven/ a peaceful era

【河清难俟】hé qīng nán dài

it is hard to wait till the river is clear — the time would be too long

【和风细雨】hé fēng xì yǔ

like a gentle breeze and a mild rain — in a gentle and mild way (or manner)/ in a genial (or amiable) manner/ not be rough

**【和睦相处】** hé mù xiāng chǔ

be happy together/ live in harmony/ be (or live) on friendly terms with/ smoke the calumet together

**【和盘托出】** hé pán tuō chū

bring out in its entirety/ emerge in its totality/ lay all the cards on the table/ make a clean breast of everything/ make the whole thing known/ reveal everything/ without the slightest concealment/ tell all the truth

**【和颜悦色】** hé yán yuè sè

with a kind and pleasant countenance/ an amiable manner

**【和衷共济】** hé zhōng gòng jì

work together with one heart (in times of difficulty)/ pull together for common cause

**【涸辙之鲋】** hé zhé zhī fù

a fish trapped in a dry rut — a person in a desperate situation

**【赫赫有名】** hè hè yǒu míng

having a great reputation/ far-famed/ well-renowned/ illustrious

**【鹤发童颜】** hè fà tóng yán

a hoary head with a youthful face — healthy in old age/ white hair and ruddy complexion/ hale and hearty

**【鹤立鸡群】** hè lì jī qún



like a crane standing among chickens — an outstanding man in a common crowd/ excel others as a crane among chickens/ stand head and shoulders above others/ a Triton of (or among) the minnows/ the flower of the flock

【黑白分明】hēi bái fēn míng

with white and black sharply contrasted/ two attitudes stand in sharp contrast/ in sharp contrast

【黑云压城城欲摧】hēi yún yā chéng chéng yù cuī

the city might crumble under the mass of dark clouds

【恨铁不成钢】hèn tiě bù chéng gāng

grudge iron having not changed into steel — grudge the successor having not matured/ wish iron could turn into steel at once — set a high demand on sb in the hope that he will improve

【恨之入骨】hèn zhī rù gǔ

hate sb to the very marrow of one's bones/ harbour bitter hatred toward sb

【恒河沙数】héng hé shā shù

as numerous as the sands of the Ganges/ innumerable/ countless

【横冲直撞】héng chōng zhí zhuàng

push one's way by shoving (or bumping)/ jostle and elbow one's way/ colliding right and left/ dash around madly/ reckless action/ barge about/ go (or be) on the (or a) rampage/ rampage

【横七竖八】héng qī shù bā

in disorder/ at sixes and sevens/ higgledy-piggledy/  
topsy-turvy

【横扫千军】héng sǎo qiān jūn

sweep away the enemy/ sweep all before one

【横生枝节】héng shēng zhī jié

side issues or new problems unexpectedly crop up/  
trouble arising on every hand/raise obstacles/ deliber-  
atedly complicate an issue

【横行霸道】héng xíng bà dào

act against law and reason/ play the tyrant (or  
bully)/ truculently and tyrannically/ ride roughshod  
(over sb)/ run wild/ lord it over/ tyrannize/ domi-  
neer

【横行无忌】héng xíng wú jì

run amuck/(of reactionary forces) do evil outra-  
geously

【横征暴敛】héng zhēng bào liǎn

(of reactionary rulers)cruelly exploit the people with  
exorbitant taxes and miscellaneous levies/ extort ille-  
gal (or excessive) taxes and levies/ levy exorbitant  
taxes/ bleed the people white with taxes

【轰轰烈烈】hōng hōng liè liè

on a grand and spectacular scale/ magnificent and  
victorious/ with vigour and vitality/ amid fire and  
thunder/ stormy and heroic/ vigorous/ dynamic/ re-  
soundingly

【哄堂大笑】hōng táng dà xiào

the whole company bursting into laughter/ the whole room rocking with laughter

【烘云托月】hōng yún tuō yuè

paint clouds to set off the moon — art of using contrasting effect/ provide a foil to set off a character (or an incident) in a literary work

【红光满面】hóng guāng mǎn miàn

one's face glowing with health/ in ruddy health

【洪水猛兽】hóng shuǐ měng shòu

fierce floods and savage beasts — great scourges/ like flood and wild beasts

【后发制人】hòu fā zhì rén

gain mastery by striking only after the enemy has struck/ take action after

【后顾之忧】hòu gǔ zhī yōu

fear of disturbance in the rear/ fear of attack from behind/ trouble (or worries) back at home

【后患无穷】hòu huàn wú qióng

source of endless trouble (or disastrous aftermaths)/ no end of trouble for the future

【后继无人】hòu jì wú rén

lack of successors (to the cause)/ no qualified successor/ none capable of continuing a given task

【后继有人】hòu jì yǒu rén

there is no lack of successors to carry on the cause/

have qualified successors to the cause

【后来居上】hòu lái jū shàng

those that came last occupy the highest post/ the latecomers surpass the old-timers (or the early starters)/ the newcomers have outdone the old hands/ successors excel the predecessors/latecomers become the first/ catch up (or come forward) from behind

【后浪推前浪】hòu làng tuī qián làng

each wave pushing at the one ahead/ waves urge waves/ things develop ceaselessly with the new superseding the old

【后起之秀】hòu qǐ zhī xiù

an up-and-coming youngster/ a promising young person

【后生可畏】hòu shēng kě wēi

a youth is to be regarded with respect — the younger generation will surpass the older/ the young are to be regarded with awe/ every oak has been an acorn

【厚此薄彼】hòu cǐ bó bǐ

favour one and slight (or be prejudiced against) the other/ discriminate against some and favour others/ say turkey to one and buzzard to another/ treat with partiality

【厚颜无耻】hòu yán wú chǐ

have no (sense of) shame/ have the cheek (or face) to say (or to do) sth/ have the impudence to (do sth)/ be quite without shame/ be lost to shame/ be

dead to shame/ be past shame/ (as) bold as brass/  
impudent/ brazen/ thick-skinned/ shameless

【呼风唤雨】hū fēng huàn yǔ

summon (or call for) wind and rain — control the  
forces of nature/ summon the storm/ stir up trouble

【呼之即来, 挥之即去】hū zhī jí lái, huī zhī jí qù

bring under one's thumb/ have sb at one's beck and  
call/ have sb at one's disposal/ make sb do his bid-  
ding

【呼之欲出】hū zhī yù chū

(of lifelike figures in pictures or characters in novels)  
seem ready to come out at one's call — very vividly  
portrayed

【囫囵吞枣】hú lún tūn zǎo

swallow a date whole — read without understanding  
(or thinking)/ lap up information without digesting  
it/ gulp down without thought

【狐假虎威】hú jiǎ hǔ wēi

the fox borrows the tiger's terror (by walking in the  
latter's company) — pretending to power, etc. / a fox  
makes himself feared by walking in tiger's company/ a  
man assuming self-importance by his powerful con-  
nections/ bully people by flaunting one's powerful  
connections/ take advantage of the influence of oth-  
ers

【狐狸尾巴】hú lí wěi bā

fox's tail — sth that gives away a person's real charac-  
ter or evil intentions/ cloven hoof

**【狐群狗党】** hú qún gǒu dǎng

a set (or pack) of rogues/ a gang of scoundrels/ a bad lot/ evil associates

**【胡说八道】** hú shuō bā dào

talk (or prate) nonsense/ sheer (or unadulterated) nonsense/ stuff and nonsense/ rave about/ balderdash/ rubbish

**【胡思乱想】** hú sī luàn xiǎng

stupid thoughts/ vain imaginings/ imagine things/ let one's imagination run away with him/ go off into wild flights of fancy/ have a maggot in one's brain (or head)/ wild-goose chase/ crankily

**【胡言乱语】** hú yán luàn yǔ

foolish (or random) talk/ talk folly (or nonsense)/ babble about/ all (in) one's eye/ rave

**【胡作非为】** hú zuò fēi wéi

act wildly in defiance of the law (or public opinion)/ commit all kinds of outrages/ run amuck/ criminal actions

**【虎背熊腰】** hǔ bèi xióng yāo

backs like tigers and loins like bears—stalwart men

**【虎口余生】** hǔ kǒu yú shēng

saved from the mouth of a tiger—a narrow escape from death/ escape with bare life/ survive a disaster/ have a narrow escape/ be snatched out of the jaws of death

**【虎视眈眈】**hǔ shì dān dān

glare like a tiger eyeing its prey/ glare at fiercely (or with fierceness)/ cast covetous (or greedy) eyes on/ eye covetously (or with hostility)

**【虎头蛇尾】**hǔ tóu shé wěi

things which start off big and then end up in nothing/ begin with tigerish energy but peter out towards the end/ failure after a great flourish of trumpets at the beginning/ a brave beginning but a weak ending/ fine start and poor finish/ do things by halves/ anti-climax/ bathos

**【虎尾春冰】**hǔ wěi chūn bīng

(like) treading on the tail of a tiger or walking on the ice in springtime—very precarious conditions/ full of apprehension

**【户限为穿】**hù xiàn wéi chuān

a threshold worn low by visitors— an endless flow of visitors

**【怙恶不悛】**hù è bù quān

persist in evil and not repent/ be steeped in evil and refuse to repent/ stick to one's arbitrary habits/ remain impenitent/ abide in sin/ (wickedly) obdurate and irreclaimable/ incorrigible/ unregenerate

**【花好月圆】**huā hǎo yuè yuán

blooming flowers and full moon — perfect conjugal bliss

**【花花公子】**huā huā gōng zǐ

a fop/ a dandy/ a coxcomb

【花花世界】huā huā shì jiè

the dazzling human world with its myriad temptations/ this mortal world/ a dissolute age

【花天酒地】huā tiān jiǔ dì

world of wine and women/ indulge in a gay life and debauchery/ indulge in dissipation/ lead a gay life/ lead a fast life/ be (out) on the tiles/ be (go or live) on the loose/ guzzle and carouse to one's heart's content

【花团锦簇】huā tuán jīn cù

bouquets of flowers and piles of silks — rich multi-coloured decorations/ confusion and gay bustle

【花言巧语】huā yán qiǎo yǔ

fair (fine, flowery, honeyed, sweet or pretty) words/ sweet chatter (or patter)/ artful talk/ lip service/ verbal tricks (or froth)/ luring (or seductive) speech/ fair-spoken/ fine-spoken/ blandishments/ blarney

【花朝月夕】huā zhāo yuè xī

the day of flowers and the evening of the moon — delightful weather and beautiful prospects/ beautiful days and nights with moon and flowers

【花枝招展】huā zhī zhāo zhǎn

(of women) be gorgeously dressed/ be seductively dressed

【华而不实】huá ér bù shí

flashy and without substance/ showy and not sub-



stantial/ superficially clever/ have all one's goods in the window/ gimcracky/ specious/ gewgaw

【哗众取宠】huá zhòng qǔ chǒng

try to please the public with claptrap/ curry favour by claptrap/ talk big to impress people/ impress people by claptrap/ play to the gallery/ play with an eye to the gallery

【滑头滑脑】huá tóu huá nǎo

as slippery as an eel/ crafty/ artful/ slick

【化为灰烬】huà wéi huī jìn

become ashes/ reduced to ashes/ end in smoke

【化为乌有】huà wéi wū yǒu

be reduced to zero/ come to naught (or nothing)/ turn to dust and ashes/ dissolve (disappear, melt or vanish) into thin air/ dwindle away into nothing/ revert to nothing

【化险为夷】huà xiǎn wéi yí

turn danger into safety/ come out safely from danger/ head off a disaster/ fall on one's feet/ save the situation/ bring order and peace out of chaos and confusion

【化整为零】huà zhěng wéi líng

break up the whole into parts

【话不投机半句多】huà bù tóu jī bàn jǔ duō

when the conversation gets disagreeable, to say one word more is a waste of breath

## 【画饼充饥】huà bǐng chōng jī

draw a cake and call it a dinner — a Barmecide feast/  
draw cakes to allay hunger — feed on illusions/ eat the  
air

## 【画地为牢】huà dì wéi láo

draw a circle on the ground for a prison — restrict sb's  
activities to a designated area or sphere

## 【画虎画皮难画骨，知人知面不知心】huà hǔ huà pí nán

huà gǔ, zhī rén zhī miàn bù zhī xīn

in drawing a tiger, you show its skin but not its  
bones; in knowing a man, you know his face but not  
his heart

## 【画虎类狗】huà hǔ lèi gǒu

make an attempt at a picture of a tiger and only  
achieve the likeness of a dog — attempting more than  
one has ability for/ try to draw a tiger and end up  
with the likeness of a dog — make a poor imitation

## 【画龙点睛】huà lóng diǎn jīng

bring the painted dragon to life by putting in the  
pupils of its eyes — add the touch that brings a work  
of art to life/ put life into sth like dotting the eyeballs  
to a painted dragon/ put the finishing touches on sth/  
add a word or two to clinch the point

## 【画蛇添足】huà shé tiān zú

draw a snake and add feet to it — ruin the effect by  
adding sth superfluous/ do what is superfluous like

adding feet to a painted snake/ to over-reach the mark is just as bad as not reaching it/ gild the lily/ put butter on (or upon) bacon/ fan the breezes

【欢声雷动】huān shēng léi dòng

cheers resound like rolls of thunder/ burst into the thunders of applause/ a thundering applause/ thunderous cheers

【欢天喜地】huān tiān xǐ dì

extravagant joy and rejoicing/ rapt to the seventh heaven/ be in (or go into) raptures/ tread on air/ as pleased as one can be/ extremely delighted/ filled with joy/ with boundless joy/ wild with joy/ with great delight/ overjoyed

【欢欣鼓舞】huān xīn gǔ wǔ

be filled with exultation/ be elated and inspired/ highly elated (or delighted)/ full of joy and enthusiasm/ dance (or jump) for joy/ rejoice/ jubilantly

【缓兵之计】huǎn bīng zhī jì

the strategy of delaying the approach of the enemy's troops/ a strategy to stall off immediate attack by enemy/ measures to stave off an attack/ stratagem to gain a respite/ stalling tactics

【缓不济急】huǎn bù jì jí

leisurely action will not help in desperate crises/ slow action cannot save a critical situation

【缓急轻重】huǎn jí qīng zhòng

in order of importance and urgency/ order of priority

/ relative importance and urgency

【换汤不换药】huàn tāng bù huàn yào

change the liquid but not the drugs — a superficial reform/ the same old stuff with a different label/ a change in form but not in content (or essence)/ make a superficial change/ old wine in new bottles

【涣然冰释】huàn rán bīng shì

vanish like the melting ice — (of doubts or suspicions) being quickly dispelled/ melt (or cleared) away

【焕然一新】huàn rán yī xīn

take on an entirely new look (or aspect)/ take on a fresh complexion/ having a bright new look/ look brand-new/ quite new/ spick-and-span

【患得患失】huàn dé huàn shī

distressed in mind trying to get sth, and then troubled lest he lose it/ worry about personal gains and losses/ think in terms of personal gain and loss/ be swayed by considerations of personal gain and loss

【患难与共】huàn nàn yǔ gòng

share a common fate/ cast (in) one's lot with sb/ throw in one's lot with sb/ go through thick and thin together

【患难之交】huàn nàn zhī jiāo

friendship made during adversity/ friends in adversity/ tested friends/ friends in need

【荒诞不经】huāng dàn bù jīng

absurd and unreasonable/ preposterous/ fantastic

【荒诞无稽】huāng dàn wú jī  
absurd and unbelievable/ irrational/ legendary/  
mythological/ fabulous

【荒谬绝伦】huāng miù jué lún  
absolutely preposterous/ utterly absurd/ absurd in  
the highest degree/ absurd beyond compare/ the  
height of absurdity/ extremely ludicrous

【荒时暴月】huāng shí bào yuè  
time of dearth/ in hard time/ lean year

【荒无人烟】huāng wú rén yān  
desolate and uninhabited/ no human habitation

【荒淫无耻】huāng yín wú chǐ  
dissipated and unshamed/ be dissolute in conduct

【黄粱一梦】huáng liáng yī mèng  
Golden Millet Dream (from the story of a poor scholar who dreamt that he had become a high official but awoke to find only the pot of millet still cooking on the fire)/ a vanished dream/ pipe dream/ disillusionment

【惶惶不可终日】huáng huáng bù kě zhōng rì  
be kept in a state of constant nervousness/ be in a constant state of anxiety/ be kept perpetually in a state of tension/ in a desperate situation/ unending anxiety/ be on tenterhooks all the time

【惶恐不安】huáng kǒng bù ān  
be terrified and uneasy/ be seized with fear/ in fear and trepidation/ panic-stricken

【恍然大悟】 huǎng rán dà wù

suddenly see the light/ suddenly realize/ wake up to/  
disenchanted

【恍如隔世】 huǎng rú gé shì

as if being cut off from the outside world for ages

【灰心丧气】 huī xīn sàng qì

be utterly disheartened/ lose heart (or interest)/ be  
dispirited or discouraged/ disappointed/ despair

【挥汗如雨】 huī hàn rú yǔ

drip with sweat

【挥金如土】 huī jīn rú tǔ

spend money like water/ squander money like dust/  
throw money about like dirt/ be profuse of one's  
money

【回光返照】 huí guāng fǎn zhào

the reflected ray of the setting sun—the transient re-  
viving of the dying/ momentary recovery of con-  
sciousness just before death/ a lighting before death/  
brief glow of health before passing away/ a sudden  
spurt of activity prior to collapse

【回天乏术】 huí tiān fá shù

be powerless to save the desperate situation/ be inca-  
pable of saving a desperate situation

【回天之力】 huí tiān zhī lì

tremendous power to overcome difficulties

【回头是岸】 huí tóu shì àn

turn the head and there is the shore — repent and be saved/ (just) repent and salvation is at hand/ turn from one's evil ways/ repentance is salvation/ it is never too late to mend

【回味无穷】huí wèi wú qióng

lead a person to endless aftertastes/ be led up to meaningful afterthoughts

【回心转意】huí xīn zhuǎn yì

change one's mind and come back to former relation/ change one's mind (or views)/ correct one's conduct/ repent and reform/ come around/ a change of heart

【悔不当初】huǐ bù dāng chū

regret having done sth in that way

【悔过自新】huǐ guò zì xīn

repent and make a new start/ repent and turn over a new leaf/ repent and start with a clean slate

【悔之无及】huǐ zhī wú jí

too late to repent (or regret)/ too late for remorse/ cry over spilt milk

【毁于一旦】huǐ yú yī dàn

be destroyed in a moment (or in one day)

【讳疾忌医】huì jí jì yī

conceal the disease and avoid the doctor — hide one's fault for fear of criticism/ hide one's sickness for fear of treatment/ gloss over one's shortcomings (or faults) for fear of being criticized

**【讳莫如深】** huì mò rú shēn

carefully conceal or avoid mentioning (one's scandal, etc.)/ closely guard a secret/ not breathe a word to a soul/ not utter a single word about sth/ keep sth shady

**【诲盗诲淫】** huì dào huì yín

propagate sex and violence/ stir up the base passions

**【诲人不倦】** huì rén bù juàn

be tireless in teaching/ teach without weariness/ teach with tireless zeal/ be never tired of teaching people

**【绘声绘色】** huì shēng huì sè

vivid description/ described to the life/ true to nature/ vivid/ lively

**【贿赂公行】** huì lù gōng xíng

give and take bribes openly/ commit briberies undisguisedly

**【昏昏欲睡】** hūn hūn yù shuì

drowsy/ sleepy

**【昏天黑地】** hūn tiān hēi dì

in total darkness/ darkness through and through/ dark rule and social disorder/ pitch-dark/ dizzy

**【昏头昏脑】** hūn tóu hūn nǎo

addleheaded/ muddleheaded/ absent-minded/ forgetful

**【浑浑噩噩】** hún hún è è



in a nebulous state/ muddle along/ignorant/simple-minded/muddle-headed

【浑然一体】hún rán yī tǐ

one integrated mass/ a unified entity/ an integral whole

【浑身是胆】hún shēn shì dǎn

be every inch a hero/ be the very embodiment of valour

【浑水摸鱼】hún shuǐ mō yú

fish in troubled waters

【魂不附体】hún bù fù tǐ

"soul departs from body"—severely shocked (or upset)/ as if the soul had left the body/ soul and body parted/ be entranced with (fear)/ be frightened out of one's wits/ go down in one's boots

【魂飞魄散】hún fēi pò sǎn

frightened out of one's senses (or wits)

【混世魔王】hùn shì mó wáng

fiend in human shape/ devil incarnate

【混为一谈】hùn wéi yī tán

lump (or jumble) together/ confuse sth with sth else

【混淆黑白】hùn xiáo hēi bái

mix up black and white/ confuse (or juggle) black and white/ obliterate difference between black and white/ turn things upside down

【混淆是非】hùn xiáo shì fēi

confuse (or confound) right and wrong

【混淆视听】hùn·xiáo shì tīng

mislead the public (or the people)/ lead the public opinion astray/ confuse (the )public opinion

【活到老,学到老】huó dào lǎo, xué dào lǎo

one is never too old to learn/ it is never too late to learn/ live and learn

【活龙活现】huó lóng huó xiàn

tone it up with colour and life/ make sth come to life/ living image of/ vividly/ lifelike

【火上加油】huǒ shàng jiā yóu

pour oil on the fire (or flames)/ add fuel to the flames (or fire)/ add oil to fire/ inflame one's anger

【火烧火燎】huǒ shāo huǒ liǎo

feeling terribly hot/ restless with anxiety

【火烧眉毛】huǒ shāo méi máo

the fire is singeing the eyebrows — a desperate situation/ fire singeing the eyebrows — an imminent crisis/ a matter of the utmost urgency

【火树银花】huǒ shù yín huā

fiery trees with silver flowers — a display of fireworks and a sea of lanterns (on a festival night)/ bonfires display or brilliantly lighted garden

【火中取栗】huǒ zhōng qǔ lì

pull chestnuts out of the fire/ be a cat's-paws (of

sb)

【货真价实】huò zhēn jià shí

genuine goods at a fair price/ through-and-through/  
one-hundred-per-cent/ out-and-out/ dyed-in-the-  
wool

【祸不单行】huò bù dān xíng

misfortunes never come alone (or singly)/ an evil  
chance seldom comes alone/ one misfortune rides up-  
on another's back/ it never rains but it pours/ trou-  
bles never come singly/ one woe doth tread upon  
another's heels

【祸国殃民】huò guó yāng mǐn

bring disaster (or calamity) to the country and the  
people/ injure (or ruin) the country and bring  
calamity (or disaster) to the people/ wreck the coun-  
try and ruin the people

【豁达大度】huò dá dà dù

open-minded and magnanimous/ generous

【豁然贯通】huò rán guān tōng

suddenly see the whole thing in a clear light

【豁然开朗】huò rán kāi lǎng

suddenly see the light/ suddenly cleared up/ be sud-  
denly enlightened

**【饥不择食】** jī bù zé shí

a hungry person is not choosy about his food/ all food is delicious to the starving/ hunger is the best sauce/ beggars must (or should) be no choosers/ a good appetite is a good sauce/ nothing comes amiss (or wrong) to a hungry man

**【饥肠辘辘】** jī cháng lù lù

one's stomach rumbling with hunger/ rumblings of an empty stomach

**【饥寒交迫】** jī hán jiāo pò

suffer cold and hunger/ live in hunger and cold/ a life of cold and hunger/ misery of starvation and poverty/ be poverty-stricken

**【机不可失,时不再来】** jī bù kě shī, shí bù zài lái

don't let slip an opportunity; it may never come again/ don't lose a golden opportunity; it is never found again/ now or never

**【鸡飞蛋打】** jī fēi dàn dǎ

the hen has flown away and the eggs in the coop are broken—all is lost/ come out empty-handed

**【鸡零狗碎】** jī líng gǒu suì

bits and pieces of things of little value/ in bits and pieces/ odds and ends/ fragmentary

**【鸡毛蒜皮】** jī máo suàn pí

chicken feathers and garlic skins—trifles/ trivialities

**【鸡鸣狗盗】** jī míng gǒu dào

(ability to) crow like a cock and snatch like a dog —  
small tricks

【鸡犬不惊】jī quǎn bù jīng

even fowls and dogs are not disturbed — excellent  
army discipline/ complete peace and quiet/ peace and  
tranquility

【鸡犬不留】jī quǎn bù liú

even fowls and dogs are not spared — ruthless mass  
slaughter/ not a fowl nor a dog left — of utter (com-  
plete or total) extermination

【鸡犬不宁】jī quǎn bù níng

even the fowls and dogs are not left in peace — general  
turmoil/ greatly upset like a poultry yard visited by a  
fox

【积不相能】jī bù xiāng néng

have always been at variance/ have never been on  
good terms/ be always at loggerheads

【积谷防饥】jī gǔ fáng jī

store up grain against dearth (or a bad year)/ accu-  
mulate grains against famine

【积毁销骨】jī huǐ xiāo gǔ

much reviling and slander wears the bone — i. e.,  
when everybody speaks against a person, it makes  
him tired of life

【积劳成疾】jī láo chéng jí

fall sick from overwork/ break down from constant overwork

【积年累月】jī nián lěi yuè

for months and years

【积少成多】jī shǎo chéng duō

from small increments comes abundance/ economy in trifles ensures abundance/ take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves/ many a little (or pickle) makes a mickle/many drops make a shower

【积羽沉舟】jī yǔ chén zhōu

enough feathers can sink a boat — tiny things may gather into a mighty force/ a heavy enough load of feathers can sink a boat — the awesome power of sheer numbers

【积重难返】jī zhòng nán fǎn

old habits are difficult to get rid of/ ingrained habits cannot be cast off overnight/ bad old practices die hard

【积铢累寸】jī zhū lěi cùn

accumulate little by little (or bit by bit)/ build up bit by bit/ save every tiny bit/ let small amounts accumulate

【激浊扬清】jī zhuó yáng qīng

eliminate the impure from the pure/ drain away the mud and bring in fresh water/ drive out evil and usher in good/ cast out the wicked and cherish the virtuous/ eliminate vice and exalt virtue/ remove evil-do-

ers and promote the pure

【及锋而试】jí fēng ér shì

try while the point is sharp/ strike the iron while it is hot

【吉光片羽】jí guāng piàn yǔ

a fragment of a highly treasured relic

【岌岌可危】jí jí kě wēi

be in great danger/ in imminent peril/ in a precarious situation/ hang by a hair/ be placed in jeopardy/ between the beetle and the block/ extremely hazardous

【即景生情】jí jǐng shēng qíng

the scene brings back memories/ the scene touches a chord in one's heart

【即以其人之道，还治其人之身】jí yǐ qí rén zhī dào, huán zhì qí rén zhī shēn

deal with a man as he deals with you/ pay sb back in his own coin/ do unto them as they do unto us/ give sb a dose of his own medicine/ serve sb with the same sauce/ beat one at his own game

【佶屈聱牙】jí qū áo yá

(of writings) difficult to pronounce or comprehend

【急风暴雨】jí fēng bào yǔ

a strong gale and a torrential downpour/ violent storms/ tempest/ turbulent

【急公好义】jí gōng hào yì

zealous for the common weal/ zealous for the public

interests/ public-spirited

【急功近利】jí gōng jìn lì

be anxious to make quick success and instant benefits/ eager for quick success and instant benefit

【急来抱佛脚】jí lái bào fó jiǎo

never burn incense when all is well but clasp Buddha's feet when in distress—seek help at the last moment

【急流勇退】jí liú yǒng tuì

resolutely retire at the height of one's official career/ make a quick retreat before crisis

【急起直追】jí qǐ zhí zhuī

rouse oneself to catch up

【急如星火】jí rú xīng huǒ

requiring lightning action (admitting of no delay)/ extremely pressing/ most urgent/ posthaste

【急中生智】jí zhōng shēng zhì

suddenly hit upon a way out of a predicament/ show resourcefulness in an emergency/ have quick wits in emergency

【急转直下】jí zhuǎn zhí xià

(of the march of events, etc.) take a sudden turn and then develop rapidly/ go into a precipitous decline

【疾恶如仇】jí è rú chóu

abhor (or hate) evils or evildoers as if they were



personal enemies/ hate evil as one does his enemy/  
hate evil like an enemy/ have an abhorrence of evil

【疾风知劲草】jǐ fēng zhī jìng cǎo

the force of the wind tests the strength of the grass —  
strength of character is tested in a crisis/ the strong  
wind reveals the strength of the grass — in time of  
disorder, the loyal and the disloyal are revealed/ ad-  
versity is the best testing ground for moral stamina

【疾首蹙额】jǐ shǒu cù é

with aching head and knitted brows — abhorrence

【疾言厉色】jǐ yán lì sè

harsh words and stern looks/ sudden outpourings and  
fierce looks

【疾足先得】jǐ zú xiān dé

the hasty foot gets there first

【集思广益】jí sī guǎng yì

draw on collective wisdom and absorb all useful  
ideas/ pool the wisdom of the masses/ benefit by mu-  
tual discussion/ good at listening to all useful opin-  
ions

【集腋成裘】jí yè chéng qiú

the finest fragments of fox fur, sewn together, will  
make a robe — many a little makes a mickle/ the bits  
of fur from the axillae of many foxes taken together  
will make a robe/ many drops of water make an o-  
cean

【己所不欲，勿施于人】jǐ suǒ bù yù, wù shī yú rén

do not do to others that which you do not wish to be done to yourself/ don't do to others what you would not like others do to you

【计日程功】jì rì chéng gōng

estimate exactly how much time is needed to complete a project/ have the completion of a project well in sight

【记忆犹新】jì yì yóu xīn

be still fresh in one's memory (or in the memory of)/ be green in sb's memory/ remain fresh in one's memory (or mind)

【既来之，则安之】jì lái zhī, zé ān zhī

since you have come, take your ease/ since we are here, we may as well stay and make the best of it

【既往不咎】jì wǎng bù jiù

things that are past, it is needless to blame/ forgive sb's past misdeeds/ not censure sb for his past misdeeds/ be let off for one's past misdeeds/ let bygones be bygones

【继往开来】jì wǎng kāi lái

be a follower of past traditions and a trial blazer for future generations/ carry on past traditions and open up a way for those who follow/ carry forward the (revolutionary) cause and forge ahead into the future

【寄人篱下】jì rén lí xià

live under another's roof/ depend (or rely) on sb for

a living/ depend on another person for support/ live  
ondependence of sb/ live under subjugation/ sponge  
on (or upon) another

【家常便饭】jiā cháng biàn fàn

homely food/ simple meal/ common occurrence/ all  
in the day's work/ routine

【家丑不可外扬】jiā chǒu bù kě wài yáng

domestic shame should not be made public/ don't  
wash your dirty linen in public/ it is an ill bird that  
fouls its own nest

【家给人足】jiā rén jǐ rén zú

wealthy homes and contented people — a district  
where there are no poor/ each family is provided for  
and every person is well-fed and well-clothed/ all live  
in plenty

【家破人亡】jiā pò rén wáng

with one's family broken up, some gone away, some  
dead/ with the family broken up and decimated

【家徒四壁】jiā tú sì bì

have nothing but the bare walls in one's house — be  
utterly destitute/ a house empty of all furniture/  
(as) poor as a church mouse/ (as) poor as Job

【家喻户晓】jiā yù hù xiǎo

everybody knows about it/ be well known to every  
household/ known to every family/ widely known/  
known to all/ known by one and all/ become a house-  
hold word/ every barber knows that

**【嘉言懿行】** jiā yán yì xíng

good words and admirable conducts/ wise words and exemplary conduct

**【假公济私】** jiǎ gōng jì sī

use public office for private gain/ seek one's own profit in public affairs/ jobbing for selfish ends/ promote one's private interests under the guise of serving the public/ gain private ends in public cause (or by public money)/ enrich oneself at the public expense/ jobbery

**【假仁假义】** jiǎ rén jiǎ yì

pretended benevolence and righteousness/ pretend to be the paragon of virtue/ don a pious mask/ hypocrisy/ hypocritically

**【价廉物美】** jià lián wù měi

(of goods) cheap and fine/ low prices and fine quality/ fine wares at low prices/ a small price for good article/ a good buy/ filling at the price

**【价值连城】** jià zhí lián chéng

worth several cities — invaluable/ priceless

**【驾轻就熟】** jià qīng jiù shú

drive a light carriage on a familiar road — do sth one knows well and can manage with ease/ be able to handle a job with ease because one has had previous experience/ do a familiar job with ease/ (be) in one's element/ be versed in/ well qualified for a post

**【嫁祸于人】** jià huò yú rén

shift the misfortune onto sb else/ shift the blame on sb/ lay one's own fault at sb else's door/ put blame on others/ shift (or bring) evil on another maliciously/ transfer the evil to another

**【尖酸刻薄】** jiān suān kè bó

(speak) with biting sarcasm/ bitterly sarcastic/ tart and mean

**【坚壁清野】** jiān bì qīng yě

strengthen defence works, evacuate noncombatants, and hide provisions and livestock/ strengthen the defences and clear the fields/ strengthen the bulwarks and leave no provisions outside

**【坚不可摧】** jiān bù kě cuī

be secure against assault/ indestructible/ impregnable

**【坚持不懈】** jiān chí bù xiè

untiring perseverance/ consistent and untiring efforts/ unwearyingly/ unremittingly/ perseveringly/ persistent

**【坚持不渝】** jiān chí bù yú

persist in/ stick to/ perseveringly/ unremitting/ persistent

**【坚定不移】** jiān dìng bù yí

firm and unshakable/ unswerving/ unflinching/ immovable/ steadfast

**【坚固不拔】** jiān gù bù bá

firm and indestructible

【坚甲利兵】jiān jiǎ lì bīng

strong armour and sharp weapons

【坚韧不拔】jiān rèn bù bá

firm and indomitable/ persistent and dauntless/ stubbornly and unyieldingly/ keep (carry or have) a stiff upper lip/ bear up

【坚如磐石】jiān rú pán shí

solid as a rock/ (as) firm as a rock/ rock-firm/ steadfast/ monolithic

【坚信不疑】jiān xìn bù yí

have infinite faith in/ with confidence

【坚贞不屈】jiān zhēn bù qū

faithful (or loyal) to the bitter end/ remain faithful and unyielding/ stand firm and unyielding

【艰苦奋斗】jiān kǔ fèn dòu

brave hard and bitter struggles/ struggle hard amid difficulties/ work hard and perseveringly/ make intense effort/ through hard struggle/ arduous struggle/ hard-hitting

【艰苦朴素】jiān kǔ pǔ sù

hard work and plain living/ hard-working and plain-living

【艰苦卓绝】jiān kǔ zhuō jué

extreme hardships and difficulties/ extremely hard and bitter/ overcome untold difficulties with surpass-

ing bravery/ most arduous

【艰难竭蹶】jiān nán jié jié

difficulties and hardships/ hardship and destitution

【艰难曲折】jiān nán qū zhé

arduous and tortuous/ difficulties and setbacks

【艰难险阻】jiān nán xiǎn zǔ

difficulties and dangers/ difficulties and obstacles

【肩摩毂击】jiān mó gǔ jī

shoulder to shoulder and hub to hub — crowded with people and vehicles/ overcrowded with people and traffic

【监守自盗】jiān shǒu zì dào

steal what is entrusted to one's care/ custodian turned thief/ embezzle/ defalcate

【兼容并包】jiān róng bìng bāo

all-inclusive/ (of interest) catholic

【兼收并蓄】jiān shōu bìng xù

incorporate things of diverse nature/ take in everything/ swallow anything and everything/ all-embracing

【兼听则明，偏信则暗】jiān tīng zé míng, piān xìn zé àn

listen to both sides and you will be enlightened; heed only one side and you will be benighted

【简明扼要】jiǎn míng é yào

short (brief or concise) and to the point/ terse and

concise/ be short and sweet/ put it in a nutshell

【见多识广】jiàn duō shí guǎng

experienced and knowledgeable/ well-read and wide experience/ have seen much of the world

【见风转舵】jiàn fēng zhuǎn duò

sail with the wind/ trim one's (or the) sail to the wind/ see how the wind blows/ have it both ways/ see how the cat jumps

【见缝插针】jiàn fèng chā zhēn

stick in a pin wherever there's room — make use of every bit of time or space

【见怪不怪】jiàn guài bù guài

become inured to the unusual (weird, uncanny)/ face the fearful with no fears

【见机而作】jiàn jī ér zuò

act according to circumstances/ act as the occasion serves/ take the cue and act accordingly/ take advantage of an opportunity that comes one's way/ do as one sees fit

【见利忘义】jiàn lì wàng yì

forget all moral principles at the sight of profits/ forget principles for the sake of profit/ forget honor at sight of money/ sell one's birthright (for a mess of pottage)/ actuated by mercenary views

【见猎心喜】jiàn liè xīn xǐ

thrill to see one's favourite sport and itch to have a go



【见仁见智】jiàn rén jiàn zhì

different people, different views/ opinions differ/  
each according to his lights

【见所未见, 闻所未闻】jiàn suǒ wèi jiàn , wén suǒ wèi  
wén

never seen or heard of before/ unprecedented

【见微知著】jiàn wēi zhī zhù

from the first small beginnings one can see how  
things will develop/ from one small clue one can see  
what is coming/ recognize the whole through obser-  
vation of the part

【见物不见人】jiàn wù bù jiàn rén

see things but not people/ see only material factors to  
the neglect of human ones/ ignore the human factor  
and see only the material factor

【见异思迁】jiàn yì sī qiān

change one's mind the moment one sees something  
new/ desire to change one's work the moment one  
sees something different/ always look for a change  
when seeing sth better/ be full of fancies/ be incon-  
stant or irresolute/ freakish

【见义勇为】jiàn yì yǒng wéi

ready to take up the cudgels for a just cause/ never  
hesitate to do what is right/ gallantly rise to the oc-  
casion/ moral courage

【剑拔弩张】jiàn bá nǚ zhāng

with swords drawn and bows bent/ (of armies) all set for a showdown/ (of situation) becoming dangerously explosive/ (of person) ready to jump at each other's throat/ be at daggers drawn/ in a blustering and aggressive manner/ sabre-rattling

【鉴往知来】jiàn wǎng zhī lái

see visions of things by (or from) experiences

【箭在弦上】jiàn zài xián shàng

like an arrow on the bowstring — there can be no turning back/ the arrow is on the bow — poised to strike/ a point of no return

【江河日下】jiāng hé rì xià

the rivers daily decrease their flow — going from bad to worse/ degenerate day by day/ be on the decline/ gradual declension/ fall away

【江山易改,本性难移】jiāng shān yì gǎi, běn xìng nán yí

it's easy to change rivers and mountains but hard to change a person's nature/ rivers and mountains may be changed but it is hard to alter a man's nature/ a leopard cannot change its spots/ a sow, when washed, returns to the muck

【江心补漏】jiāng xīn bǔ lòu

mend a leaking boat in midstream — too late

【江洋大盗】jiāng yáng dà dào

an infamous robber or pirate/a sea robber/a highway

robber

【将错就错】jiāng cuò jiù cuò

leave a mistake uncorrected and make the best of it/  
take the wrong and make the best of it/ make the  
best of a bad bargain (or of a mistake)/ over shoes  
over boots

【将功补过】jiāng gōng bǔ guò

make amends for one's faults by good deeds/ make up  
for one's mistakes with new contributions/ make up  
for one's mistakes by winning merit

【将功赎罪】jiāng gōng shú zuì

redeem sins by good deeds/ make amends for one's  
crimes by good deeds/ atone for a crime by meritori-  
ous service/ atone for error by meritorious deeds/ ex-  
piate one's crime by good deeds

【将计就计】jiāng jì jiù jì

turn sb's trick against him/ meet another's scheme  
with one's own/ beat sb at his own game/ counter-  
plot

【将信将疑】jiāng xìn jiāng yí

halting between doubt and belief — indecision/ half  
believing, half doubting

【将欲取之，必先与之】jiāng yù qǔ zhī, bì xiān yǔ zhī

in order to take, one must first give/ give in order to  
take

【降格以求】jiàng gé yǐ qiú

set one's aim lower than usual, look for (person, thing) without insisting on the best/ fall back on sth inferior to what one originally wanted/ accept a second best

【交口称誉】jiāo kǒu chēng yù

praise by one and all/ unanimously praise

【交头接耳】jiāo tóu jiē ěr

speak in each other's ears/ whisper to each other/ whisper into each other's ears/ talk in whisper/ talk confidentially/ head to head

【骄兵必败】jiāo bīng bì bài

an army puffed up with pride is bound to lose/ pride goes before a fall (destruction)/ pride will have a fall

【骄奢淫逸】jiāo shē yín yì

lordly, luxury-loving, loose-living and idle/ pride, luxury, profligacy and idleness/ wallow in luxury and dissipation (or pleasure)/ extravagant and dissipated

【娇生惯养】jiāo shēng guàn yǎng

brought up in easy circumstances by doting parents/ delicate upbringing (or nurture)/ pampered since childhood/ be spoiled (or pampered)

【教猱升木】jiāo náo shēng mù

teach a monkey to climb a tree/ give boldness to an evil-doer

【蛟龙得水】jiāo lóng dé shuǐ

the flood-dragon gets to water — a hero gets an opportunity for showing his prowess

**【焦头烂额】** jiāo tóu làn é

be severely burned in assisting to extinguish a fire —  
said of one who has worked under great hardship/ be  
bruised and battered/ badly battered/ in a terrible  
fix/ utterly exhausted from overwork or anxiety/  
(beat the enemy) black and blue

**【侥幸取胜】** jiǎo xìng qǔ shèng

gain victory by sheer good luck/ win by a fluke/ win  
easy victory through good luck

**【狡兔三窟】** jiǎo tù sān kū

a wily hare has three burrows — elude discovery, bur-  
row oneself in secret hideouts/ a wily rabbit has sev-  
eral exits to its burrow — a crafty person has more  
than one hideout

**【绞尽脑汁】** jiǎo jìn nǎo zhī

cudgel one's brains/ rack one's brains

**【矫揉造作】** jiǎo róu zào zuò

airs and graces/ prunes and prism/ artificial/ affect-  
ed/ unnaturally

**【矫枉过正】** jiǎo wǎng guò zhèng

straighten the crooked beyond the straight/ exceed  
the proper limits in righting a wrong/ take excessive  
measures/ overshoot one's (or the) mark/ overcor-  
rect

**【脚踏两只船】** jiǎo tà liǎng zhī chuán

straddle two boats — have a foot in either camp/ sit  
on the fence/ be a fence-sitter

**【脚踏实地】** jiǎo tà shí dì

have one's feet planted on solid ground—earnest and down-to-earth/ stand on solid ground/ do solid work/ down-to-earth

**【叫苦不迭】** jiào kǔ bù dié

invariably pour out endless grievances/ constantly complain

**【叫苦连天】** jiào kǔ lián tiān

incessant grumbling (of one's hard lot)/ ventilate one's endless grievances/ complain to high heaven

**【教学相长】** jiào xué xiāng zhǎng

teaching benefits teacher and students alike/ to the benefit of both teachers and students/ both teachers and students make progress by learning from each other

**【皆大欢喜】** jiē dà huān xī

everybody is happy/ to the satisfaction of all/ satisfaction of everybody concerned

**【接二连三】** jiē èr lián sān

one after another/ in quick succession/ continuously/ repeatedly

**【接踵而来】** jiē zhǒng ér lái

come one after another/ come on uninterruptedly/ arrive successively/ on the heels of

**【揭竿而起】** jiē gān ér qǐ

raise the standard of revolt/ rise in rebellion/ outbreak of rebellion/ start an uprising

**【嗟悔无及】** jiē huǐ wú jí

it's too late to sigh or regret/ too late for regrets and lamentations

**【嗟来之食】** jiē lái zhī shí

food handed out in contempt/ a handout

**【街谈巷议】** jiē tán xiàng yì

street gossip (or rumour)/ common talk

**【街头巷尾】** jiē tóu xiàng wěi

street corners and alleys/ streets and lanes/ everywhere in the street

**【孑然一身】** jié rán yī shēn

all alone in the world/ solitary/ lonely

**【节节胜利】** jié jié shèng lì

win many victories in succession/ scoring one victory after another/ gain victory after victory/ go (or push forward) from victory to victory

**【节外生枝】** jié wài shēng zhī

branches springing from the joints--one complication arising from another/ cause complications/ one complication leading to another/ create (or inject) side issues/ proliferate issues and problems/ bring up unnecessary ramifications

**【节衣缩食】** jié yī suō shí

economize (or save) on food and clothing/ live frugally

**【劫富济贫】** jié fù jì pín

wrest (or carry off) from the rich to help the poor/  
rob the rich and help the poor

【结党营私】jié dǎng yíng sī

form a clique to pursue selfish interests/ set up  
cliques for one's own selfish interests/ form a clique  
and scheme for evil purpose/ gang up together/ nar-  
row self-seeking clique/ cabal

【洁身自好】jié shēn zì hào

refuse to be contaminated by evil influence/ lead an  
honest and clean life/ keep oneself clean/ preserve  
one's purity/ mind one's own business in order to  
keep out of trouble

【桀骜不驯】jié ào bù xún

stubborn and intractable/ obstinate and unruly

【桀犬吠尧】jié quǎn fèi yáo

the tyrant Jie's cur yapping at the sage-king Yao—ut-  
terly unscrupulous in it's zeal to please its master/  
Jie's dog barked at Yao—every one acts according to  
the nature of the man whom he serves

【捷报频传】jié bào pín chuán

triumphant news keeps pouring in/ reports of victory  
come in quick succession/ reports of new successes  
keep pouring in

【捷足先登】jié zú xiān dēng

the swift-footed arrive first/the most active will win/  
the race is to the swiftest/victory to the swift-footed/  
he that runs fastest gets the ring / the early bird



catches the worm/outstrip everyone else

【竭尽全力】jié jìn quán lì

strive to the utmost of one's strength/ to the best of one's ability/ do one's utmost/ do all one can/ strain one's efforts/ strain oneself to the limit/ strain every nerve/ spare no efforts/ with might and main/ go (to) all lengths (or any length)/ tooth and nail/ do one's level best/ move heaven and earth/ bring to bear

【竭泽而渔】jié zé ér yú

drain the pond to catch all the fish—ruin the source of supply/ fish out/ kill the goose that lays the golden eggs

【截长补短】jié cháng bǔ duǎn

take from the long to add to the short/ cut off from the long to supply the deficiency of the short/ make up a deficiency by the surplus/ even up scarcity and superabundance/ draw on the strength of one to offset the weakness of the other

【截然不同】jié rán bù tóng

poles apart/ completely (vastly or entirely) different/ different as black and white

【截趾适屣】jié zhǐ shì jù

cut the toes to fit the shoes

【解放思想】jiě fàng sī xiǎng

emancipate the mind/ emancipate sb ideologically/ free oneself from old ideas

【解甲归田】jiě jiǎ guī tián

take off one's armour and go home — retire from service/ take off one's armour and return to one's native place/ be demobilized

【解铃系铃】jiě líng jì líng

let him who tied the bell on the tiger take it off — whoever started the trouble should end it/ the man who has tied the bell on the tiger's neck should untie it/ the one who creates the problem should be the one to solve it/ it is better for the doer to undo what he has done/ untie the knot oneself tied

【解囊相助】jiě náng xiāng zhù

help sb generously with money

【戒骄戒躁】jiè jiāo jiè zào

guard against arrogance and impetuosity/ be on guard against conceit and impetuosity/ guard against pride and rashness/ avoid conceit and impetuosity

【借刀杀人】jiè dāo shā rén

murder with a borrowed knife — make use of another person to get rid of an adversary/ kill sb by another's hands/ do harm to sb through the hands of another

【借古讽今】jiè gǔ fěng jīn

use ancient things to satirize the present/ use the past to disparage the present

【借花献佛】jiè huā xiàn fó

present Buddha with borrowed flowers — borrow sth to make a gift of it/ borrow flowers to offer Buddha — offer sb favours at the expenses of another/ make

presents provided by sb else

【借尸还魂】jiè shī huán hún

(of a dead person's soul) find reincarnation in another's corpse—(of sth evil) revive in a new guise/ be reincarnated in sb else's body/ use corpses to resurrect the evil souls/ resurrect in a new guise

【借题发挥】jiè tí fā huī

make use of the subject under discussion to put over one's own ideas/ give vent to one's pent-up feelings on some extraneous pretext/ seize on an incident to exaggerate matters/ seize on some pretext (or others) to distort (the features, motives, truth, etc.)/ play on the theme of

【今非昔比】jīn fēi xī bǐ

there is no comparison between the present and the past—times have changed/ the world today is no longer what it was before

【今是昨非】jīn shì zuó fēi

from what is right today, one sees the blunders made in the past/ wake up to one's past folly after realizing what is right today

【斤斤计较】jīn jīn jì jiào

haggle over every ounce/ be calculating and unwilling to make the smallest sacrifice (especially in monetary matters)/ square accounts in every detail/ think about personal gains and losses

【金碧辉煌】jīn bì huī huáng

(of building, etc.) looking splendid in green and gold/ resplendent and magnificent/ magnificent/ splendid

【金蝉脱壳】jīn chán tuō qiào

“cicada leaving behind its cast-off part in molting”—a disappearance act from an entangled situation/ slip out of a predicament like a cicada sloughing its skin/ escape like a cicada by casting off its skin/ escape unnoticed/ stratagem for slinking off

【金城汤池】jīn chéng tāng chí

metal walls and scalding moat—an impregnable city/ ramparts of metal and a moat of boiling water—impregnable fortress/ a strong, well-guarded city/ strongly fortified city

【金戈铁马】jīn gē tiě mǎ

shining spears and armoured horses — a symbol of war in ancient China

【金科玉律】jīn kē yù lǜ

golden rule and precious precept/ laws and regulations/ infallible law

【金口玉言】jīn kǒu yù yán

oracular words/ precious words

【金瓯无缺】jīn ōu wú quē

unimpaired territorial integrity

【金石为开】jīn shí wéi kāi

the utmost sincerity can influence even metal and stone

【金玉良言】jīn yù liáng yán

a golden saying/ valuable advice

【金玉其外,败絮其中】jīn yù qí wài, bài xù qí zhōng

shining on the outside but rotten on the inside/ rubbish coated in gold and jade/ being superficially showy but actually of little value or worthless/ fair without and foul within/ the apple of Sodom

【金字招牌】jīn zì zhāo pái

gold-lettered signboard/ a vainglorious title

【津津乐道】jīn jīn lè dào

indulge in elaborating on/ take delight in talking about/ dwell upon sth with great relish

【津津有味】jīn jīn yǒu wèi

extremely interesting/ with much unction/ with keen pleasure/ with great interest/ with gusto/ with zest/ with relish

【襟怀坦白】jīn huái tǎn bái

openhearted and aboveboard/ unselfish and magnanimous/ largeness of mind/ straightforward

【紧锣密鼓】jǐn luó mì gǔ

wildly beating gongs and drums — intense publicity campaign in preparation for some sinister undertaking, etc.

【谨小慎微】jǐn xiǎo shèn wēi

meticulous to a fault/ cautious and meticulous/timor-

ous and punctilious/ timid and overcautious/ prissy/  
overcautious

**【谨言慎行】** jǐn yán shèn xíng

speak and act cautiously/ be discreet in word and  
deed/ mind one's P's and Q's

**【锦囊妙计】** jǐn náng miào jì

instructions for dealing with an emergency/ wise  
counsel/ a secret master plan/ a master stroke/ ace  
in the hole/ stratagem up one's sleeve/ have a card up  
one's sleeve

**【锦上添花】** jǐn shàng tiān huā

add flowers to the brocade — make perfection still  
more perfect/ add flowers to embroidery/ win honor  
(or successes) one after another in quick succession

**【锦绣河山】** jǐn xiù hé shān

a land of charm and beauty/ beautiful landscape (like  
brocade)/ beautiful land

**【锦绣前程】** jǐn xiù qián chéng

bright prospect/ glorious future

**【尽力而为】** jìn lì ér wéi

do one's best /do everything in one's power/ try to do  
it with utmost effort

**【尽人皆知】** jìn rén jiē zhī

be known to all/ be widely known/ be common  
knowledge/ every barber knows that/ upon the table

**【尽如人意】** jìn rú rén yì

to one's heart content

【尽善尽美】jìn shàn jìn měi

perfectly good and perfectly beautiful/ the acme of perfection/ satisfactory in every way/ perfect

【尽心竭力】jìn xīn jié lì

(do sth) with all one's heart and all one's might/ exert one's heart and strength to the utmost/ put forth the utmost exertion/ do one's best according to one's lights/ with all mind and energy/ put one's heart and soul into

【进寸退尺】jìn cùn tuì chǐ

advance an inch and lose a foot — the loss outweighs the gain/ the game is not worth the candle

【进退两难】jìn tuì liǎng nán

difficult to advance or to retreat — in a dilemma/ neither able to advance nor retreat/ on the horns of a dilemma/ in a quandary/ be between two fires

【进退失据】jìn tuì shī jù

equally difficult to go on or retreat/ be kept in the air

【进退维谷】jìn tuì wéi gǔ

advance and retreat, both difficult — in a dilemma/ up a gum-tree/ stand at a nonplus/ between the devil and the deep (or blue) sea/ between Scylla and Charybdis

【近水楼台先得月】jìn shuǐ lóu tái xiān dé yuè

a waterfront pavilion gets the moonlight first — the

advantage of being in a favoured position/ those on waterfront are the first to see the rising moon — enjoy the benefits of a favourable position

【近朱者赤，近墨者黑】jìn zhū zhě chì, jìn mò zhě hēi

he who handles vermilion will be reddened, and he who touches ink will be blackened — of the influence of companionship/ he who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and he who stays near ink gets stained black — one takes on the colour of one's company/ moral influence by contact or close association/ touch pitch, and you will be defiled/ who keeps company with the wolf, will learn to howl/ he who lies with dogs will rise with fleas

【噤若寒蟬】jìn ruò hán chán

as silent as a cicada in cold weather — keep quiet out of fear/ silent as the cicada in winter/ maintain a discreet silence/ (as) mute as a mackerel (a mouse, a poker, a fish, a statue or a stone)/ keep mum about

【涇渭不分】jīng wèi bù fēn

can not distinguish between the rivers Jing and Wei — make no such distinction between good and evil (or black and white)

【涇渭分明】jīng wèi fēn míng

as different as the waters of the Jinghe and the Weihe — entirely different/ make a clear distinction between good and evil



【经年累月】jīng nián lěi yuè

a long-drawn-out period/ for years/ year in year out

【荆棘载途】jīng jī zài tú

a path overgrown with brambles — a path beset with difficulties

【惊弓之鸟】jīng gōng zhī niǎo

birds startled by the mere twang of a bow-string/ the bird that has been injured by the bow/ a bird that starts at the sight of a bow/ a badly frightened person/ a burned child fears fire/ a scalded cat dreads cold water

【惊惶失措】jīng huāng shī cuò

in a state of panic/ be seized (or struck) with (a) panic/ be thrown into a panic/ bewhelmed in astonishment/ be frightened out of one's wits/ all in a flutter/ out of countenance/ lose one's head/ like a dying duck in thunderstorm

【惊魂未定】jīng hún wèi dìng

not yet recovered from a fright/ have hardly recovered from a recent shock/ still badly shaken

【惊恐万状】jīng kǒng wàn zhuàng

be greatly paralyzed with fear/ in a great panic/ convulsed with fear/ extremely panicky/ be struck with panic/ be thrown into consternation/ in a blue funk/ be scared stiff/ (as) scared as a rabbit/ thunder-struck

【惊涛骇浪】jīng tāo hài làng

raging (terrifying or tempestuous) waves/ stormy sea/ fierce (violent or tempestuous) storm/ a situation or life full of perils

【惊天动地】jīng tiān dòng dì

shaking heaven and earth/ startle heaven and move the earth/ it startles the universe/ earthshaking/ worldshaking/ astounding/ tremendous

【惊心动魄】jīng xīn dòng pò

profoundly affecting/ struck with fright or horror/ soul-stirring/ breathtaking/ hair-raising

【精兵简政】jīng bīng jiǎn zhèng

better troops and simpler administration/ better staff and simpler administration/ picked troops and simplified administration/ streamlined administration

【精打细算】jīng dǎ xì suàn

careful calculation and strict budgeting/ careful planning and detailed calculation/ be very careful in reckoning/ count every cent and make every cent count/ pinch pennies

【精雕细刻】jīng diāo xì kè

work at sth with the care and precision of a sculptor/ work at sth with great care/ give sth careful revision/ meticulous work/ elaborate

【精明强干】jīng míng qiáng gàn

intelligent (or shrewd) and capable/ skilled and capable/ able and efficient/ gumptious

【精疲力竭】jīng pí lì jié

be tired out extremely/ utterly exhausted/ be dead tired/ be dog-tired/ be over-spent/ be fagged out/ run down/ feel tired out

【精神抖擞】jīng shén dǒu sǒu

full of energy/ full of beans/ in high spirits/ in great form

【精神焕发】jīng shén huàn fā

in good (or high) spirits/ brimming with energy/ vigorous

【精卫填海】jīng wèi tián hǎi

the mythical bird jingwei trying to fill up the sea with pebbles — a symbol of dogged determination/ a mythical bird which tries to fill up the ocean with twigs and pebbles

【精心炮制】jīng xīn pào zhì

elaborately cook up/ be carefully dished up

【精益求精】jīng yì qiú jīng

constantly improve sth/ keep improving/ always endeavoring to do still better/ seek for ever greater perfection/ perfect one's skill constantly/ ever seeking refinement in what one does

【兢兢业业】jīng jīng yè yè

be cautious and attentive (or conscientious)/ be conscientious and earnest/ be conscientious and do one's best (or very best)/ be studious of (one's business)/ with assiduity

**【井底之蛙】** jǐng dǐ zhī wā

a frog living at the bottom of a well — a person with a very limited outlook/a man of very limited experience/ a person of narrow view/ one ignorant of the world

**【井井有条】** jǐng jǐng yǒu tiáo

be arranged in good (regular or perfect) order/ in an orderly manner/ in apple-pie order/ well-regulated/ well-arranged/ orderly/ shipshape/ methodically/ systematic

**【井水不犯河水】** jǐng shuǐ bù fàn hé shuǐ

well water does not intrude into river water — I'll mind my own business, you mind yours/ the well water does not interfere with the river water — each minds his own business/ none may encroach upon the precincts of another

**【径情直遂】** jìng qíng zhí suì

as smoothly as one would wish/ as direct and smooth as one would wish

**【敬而远之】** jìng ér yuǎn zhī

respect but do not be too familiar with/ stay at a respectful distance from sb/ keep one at a distance/ keep sb at arm's length/ give a wide berth to

**【敬酒不吃吃罚酒】** jìng jiǔ bù chī chī fá jiǔ

refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit — submit to sb's pressure after first turning down his request/ be constrained to do what one at first declined

【镜花水月】jìng huā shuǐ yuè

flowers in a mirror and the moon in water — an illusion/ beautiful but evanescent dreams/ insubstantial

【迥然不同】jiǒng rán bù tóng

definitely (widely or utterly) different/ utterly unlike/ not in the least alike/ as different as chalk from cheese

【炯炯有神】jiǒng jiǒng yǒu shén

bright piercing eyes

【九牛二虎之力】jiǔ niú èr hǔ zhī lì

the strength of nine bulls and two tigers — tremendous effort/ a tremendous amount of labour/ herculean efforts

【九牛一毛】jiǔ niú yī máo

a single hair out of nine ox hides — a drop in the bucket (or ocean)/ one hair from nine oxen — the slightest particle/ a very small minority

【九死一生】jiǔ sǐ yī shēng

extremely hazardous — only one chance of life in ten/ a narrow escape from death/ a near thing to death/ a near go/ ninety per cent dead/ only the barest chance of living/ escape with bare life/ a hair-breadth escape/ a tight squeak/ be (or have) a close shave/ imminent danger

【九霄云外】jiǔ xiāo yún wài

beyond the highest heavens/ (flung to) the four winds/ (cast to) the winds

【久别重逢】jiǔ bié chóng féng

meet again after a long separation

【久病成医】jiǔ bìng chéng yī

chronic disease makes a doctor of a patient/ prolonged illness makes the patient a good doctor

【久而久之】jiǔ ér jiǔ zhī

in the course of time/ as time passes

【久旱逢甘雨】jiǔ hàn féng gān yǔ

have a welcome rain after a long drought — have a long-felt need satisfied/ genial shower after a long drought

【久假不归】jiǔ jiǎ bù guī

put off indefinitely returning sth one has borrowed/ appropriate sth borrowed for one's own use

【酒囊饭袋】jiǔ náng fàn dài

wine sack and rice bag — a term of abuse for a gluttonous man who is also useless and ignorant/ wine skin and rice bag — a good-for-nothing person

【酒肉朋友】jiǔ ròu péng yǒu

wine-and-meat friends/ fair-weather friends

【旧仇宿怨】jiù chóu sù yuàn

old grudge (or feuds) inveterate hatred

【旧地重游】jiù dì chóng yóu

revisit a once familiar place

【旧调重弹】jiù diào chóng tán

harp on one (or the same) string/ harp (repeat or

sing) the same old tunes

【旧恨新仇】jiù hèn xīn chóu

new hatred piled on old

【旧瓶装新酒】jiù píng zhuāng xīn jiǔ

new wine in old bottles

【咎由自取】jiù yóu zì qǔ

have only oneself to blame/ the fault lies with oneself/ one brings the trouble on oneself

【咎有应得】jiù yǒu yīng dé

one deserves blame/ serve one right/ open to censure

【救死扶伤】jiù sǐ fú shāng

heal the wounded and rescue the dying

【救亡图存】jiù wáng tú cún

save the nation from subjugation and ensure its survival/ save one's country from great danger

【就地取材】jiù dì qǔ cái

obtain raw materials locally/ draw on local resources/ use local materials

【就事论事】jiù shì lùn shì

consider sth as it stands/ judge the case as it stands

【居安思危】jū ān sī wēi

think of danger in time of peace/ mindful of possible danger in time of peace/ think of possible war in peace/ be prepared for danger in time of peace/ maintain vigilance in peace time/ be vigilant in peace time

**【居高临下】** jū gāo lín xià

occupy a commanding position (or height)/ hold a vantage ground (or vantage point)/ (dash against the enemy) from the vantage ground/ look down from a height/ overlook from a vantage point

**【居功自傲】** jū gōng zì ào

claim credit for oneself and become arrogant/ pride oneself on one's merits/ style oneself hero

**【居心叵测】** jū xīn pǒ cè

cherish (or have) evil (or dark) designs/ harbour (or have) evil intentions/ with concealed intentions/ with ulterior motive/ false-hearted/ evil-minded/ insidious

**【鞠躬尽瘁，死而后已】** jū gōng jìn cuì, sǐ ér hòu yǐ

bend one's back to the task until one's dying day/ give one's all till one's heart stops beating/ give oneself entirely to the public service

**【局促不安】** jú cù bù ān

ill at ease/ feel constraint/ be (or feel) abashed/ like a cat on hot bricks/ uneasy/ perturbed

**【举不胜举】** jǔ bù shèng jǔ

too numerous to mention/ provide countless instances

**【举措失当】** jǔ cuò shī dāng

make (or take) false moves/ make an ill-advised move

**【举国上下】** jǔ guó shàng xià



people all over the country/ the whole nation/  
throughout the nation

【举目无亲】jǔ mù wú qīn

not a relative or a friend to be seen — sheer stranger in  
a place/ far away from one's kin/ find on kin to turn  
to/ have no one to turn to (for help)/ be a stranger  
in a strange land

【举棋不定】jǔ qí bù dìng

hesitate in making a move at chess/ hesitate about  
(or over) what move to make/ be unable to make up  
one's mind/ shilly-shally/ vacillate

【举世闻名】jǔ shì wén míng

of world renown/ be known to all the world/ world-  
famous

【举世无敌】jǔ shì wú dī

be matchable to none/ without an equal in the world/  
with (or find) no match in the world/ matchless in  
the world

【举世无双】jǔ shì wú shuāng

unparalleled anywhere in the world/ unmatched in  
the world/ second to none/ matchless/ unrivalled/  
peerless

【举世瞩目】jǔ shì zhǔ mù

attract worldwide attention/ become the focus of  
world attention/ world spotlight

【举一反三】jǔ yī fǎn sān

raise one corner of a subject and expect the pupil to

infer the other three/ from a part one may divine the whole/ draw inferences about other cases from one instance/ infer other things from one fact

【举足轻重】jǔ zú qīng zhòng

hold the balance/ prove decisive/ play a decisive role/ count for much/ carry a big weight in/ tip (or turn) the beam

【拒谏饰非】jù jiàn shì fēi

the rejection of criticisms and the whitewashing of one's mistakes/ refuse representations and gloss over one's mistakes (or errors)

【拒人于千里之外】jù rén yú qiān lǐ zhī wài

keep a good distance from/ have no leeway to consult with

【具体而微】jù tǐ ér wēi

have all the things available but in small proportions/ have everything in miniature/ small but complete/ miniature

【据理力争】jù lǐ lì zhēng

try to convince one's opponent with an argument/ argue strongly on just grounds

【据为己有】jù wéi jǐ yǒu

take forcible possession of/ appropriate to oneself (what rightfully belongs to another)/ make sth one's own/ appropriate

【聚精会神】jù jīng huì shén

concentrate one's attention and energy/ rivet one's

attention on (or upon)/ be all attention/ focus one's  
attention on/ be absorbed in/ with rapt attention

【聚沙成塔】jù shā chéng tā

many grains of sand piled up will make a pagoda —  
many a little makes a mickle

【聚讼纷纭】jù sòng fēn yún

argue back and forth and cannot agree/ opinions are  
widely divided/ be at variance with each other

【涓滴归公】juān dī guī gōng

turn in every cent of public money

【卷土重来】juǎn tǔ chóng lái

make a strong effort to recover lost ground after a de-  
feat/ renew an effort after failure/ stage a comeback

【决一雌雄】jué yī cī xióng

fight to see who is the stronger/ fight it out

【绝处逢生】jué chù féng shēng

be unexpectedly rescued from a desperate circum-  
stance (or situation)/ escape by the skin of one's  
teeth

【绝口不道】jué kǒu bù dào

refuse to say anything about/ never say a single word  
about/ be absolutely silent about/ avoid all mention  
of

【绝无仅有】jué wú jǐn yǒu

one and the only one/ the only one of its kind/ on ex-  
tremely rare occasions/ unique

## K

## 【开诚布公】kāi chéng bù gōng

open one's heart to sb/ speak frankly and sincerely/  
come out into the open/ straight from the shoulder/  
wear (or pin) one's heart on one's sleeve/ unbosom  
(oneself)

## 【开花结果】kāi huā jié guǒ

blossom and bear fruit—yield positive results

## 【开卷有益】kāi juàn yǒu yì

reading enriches the mind/ reading is always profitable

## 【开门见山】kāi mén jiàn shān

“let the door open on a view of mountains”— (of  
speech, conversation) come straight to the point/ declare  
one's intention immediately/ put it bluntly/  
without beating about the bush

## 【开门揖盗】kāi mén yī dào

open the door for the robbers — let in disaster by  
inviting evildoers/ put the cat near the goldfish bowl/  
ask for trouble

## 【开山祖师】kāi shān zǔ shī

the founder of a religious sect or a school of thought/

a founder/ an originator

【开台锣鼓】kāi tái luó gǔ

a flourish of gongs and drums introducing a theatrical performance

【开天辟地】kāi tiān pī dì

since the separation of heaven and earth — since the beginning of history/ from the creation of the universe/ epochmaking

【开源节流】kāi yuán jié liú

open up the source and regulate the flow/ earn more income and cut down expenses/ tap new sources of revenue and economize on expenditures/ find new sources of income while cutting down expenses

【开宗明义】kāi zōng míng yì

make clear the purpose (or the main theme) in the opening chapter or sentences/ make clear the purpose and main theme from the very beginning

【凯旋归来】kāi xuán guī lái

return in triumph/ return with flying colours/ return with drums beating and banners flying

【侃侃而谈】kǎn kǎn ér tán

talk with ease and fluency/ speak calmly and confidently/ speak with fervour and assurance

【看菜吃饭,量体裁衣】kàn cài chī fàn, liàng tǐ cái yī

fit the appetite to the dishes and the dress to the fig-

ure—adapt oneself to circumstances

【康庄大道】kāng zhuāng dà dào

broad road/ main road

【慷慨激昂】kāng kǎi jī áng

(express sth) with deep feelings and enthusiasm/ in lofty and energetic spirits/ in a moving, vehement and excited tone/ be righteously indignant (at some action or over some cause)

【慷慨解囊】kāng kǎi jiě náng

generous in loosening the (or one's) purse-strings/ help sb generously with money/ give alms liberally/ munificent

【慷慨就义】kāng kǎi jiù yì

go to one's death like a hero/ die a martyr's death

【靠山吃山, 靠水吃水】kào shān chī shān, kào shuǐ chī shuǐ

those living on the mountain live off (or get their living from) the mountain, those living near the water live off (or get their living from) the water—make use of local resources

【苛捐杂税】kē juān zá shuǐ

exorbitant taxes and miscellaneous levies

【可乘之机】kě chéng zhī jī

an opportunity that can be exploited to sb's advantage

【可歌可泣】kě gē kě qì

move one to songs and tears/ touching and deserving  
a song/ heroic and moving

【可望而不可即】kě wàng ér bù kě jí

within sight but beyond reach/ unattainable/ inaccessible

【可遇而不可求】kě yù ér bù kě qiú

may come by (sth) with luck, but not by searching  
for it/ sth unique which may come by chance but not  
by diligent search

【克敌制胜】kè dí zhì shèng

conquer the enemy/ gain mastery over the enemy/  
gain (have, obtain or win) a victory over the enemy

【克己奉公】kè jǐ fèng gōng

wholehearted devotion to public duty/ work selflessly  
for the common good

【克勤克俭】kè qín kè jiǎn

practise diligence and economy/ industrious and frugal/  
diligent and economical

【刻不容缓】kè bù róng huǎn

must not lose a minute/ not a moment to be lost/ be  
all the more urgent/ be of great urgency/ brook (or  
admit of) no delay/ call for imminent attention

【刻骨铭心】kè gǔ míng xīn

be imprinted on one's bones and in one's mind — bear  
in mind forever/ remember with gratitude to the end  
of one's life/ engraved on the heart

**【刻意求工】**kè yì qiú gōng

try to do one's very best to achieve perfection/ sedulously strive for perfection

**【刻舟求剑】**kè zhōu qiú jiàn

try to find the sword by carving a mark on the gunwale of one's moving boat where one's sword has dropped into the river — ridiculous stupidity/ take measures without regard to changes in circumstances

**【恪守不渝】**kè shǒu bù yú

strictly abide by (or stick to)/ submissively obey

**【空洞无物】**kōng dòng wú wù

utter lack of content/ devoid of content

**【空空如也】**kōng kōng rú yě

absolutely empty/ all empty

**【空口说白话】**kōng kǒu shuō bái huà

make empty promises/ pay lip service

**【空前绝后】**kōng qián jué hòu

without both precedent and following up/ unprecedented and unrepeatable/ unique

**【空前未有】**kōng qián wèi yǒu

it has never been known before/ without parallel/ unprecedented

**【空头支票】**kōng tóu zhī piào

a dud (or rubber) cheque/ a false (or bad) cheque/ empty promise/ lip service

**【空穴来风】**kōng xué lái fēng



an empty hole invites the wind — weakness lends wings to rumours

【空中楼阁】kōng zhōng lóu gé

castles in the air (or in Spain)/ a groundless plan/ a vain hope/ daydream

【口惠而实不至】kǒu huì ér shí bù zhì

make a promise but not keep it/ empty promise without substance/ pay lip service

【口口声声】kǒu kǒu shēng shēng

say again and again/ keep on saying

【口蜜腹剑】kǒu mì fù jiàn

honey in mouth, dagger in heart (or honey on one's lips and murder in one's heart) — treachery lying underneath a mask of friendship/ a mouth that praises and a hand that kills/ velvet paws hide sharp claws / an iron hand in a velvet glove/ hypocritical and malignant

【口若悬河】kǒu ruò xuán hé

let loose a torrent of eloquence/ have a glib tongue/ talk glibly/ be nimble of speech/ glib talker

【口是心非】kǒu shì xīn fēi

the mouth is right but the heart is false/ say yes and mean no/ say one thing and mean another/ cry with one eye and laugh with the other/ hypocrisy/ double-faced

【口说无凭】kǒu shuō wú píng

oral expressions cannot be taken as evidence/ verbal statements are no guarantee

【口诛笔伐】kǒu zhū bǐ fá

denounce by spoken word and writing/ condemn both in speech and in writing

【扣人心弦】kòu rén xīn xián

tug at (pull at or play upon) one's heartstrings/ touch one's feelings/ touch sb to the heart/ moving/ exciting

【枯木逢春】kū mù féng chūn

spring comes to the withered tree—get a new lease of life/ a withered tree comes to life again

【苦大仇深】kǔ dà chóu shēn

suffer bitterly and nurse deep hatred

【苦海无边，回头是岸】kǔ hǎi wú biān, huí tóu shì àn

(Buddhism) boundless is the sea of bitterness, yet a man who will repent can reach the shore nearby—escape from the human world of woes and find salvation

【苦尽甘来】kǔ jìn gān lái

after the bitter comes the sweet/ after suffering comes happiness/ luck turns after hardship/ sweet are the fruits of labour/ from foul to fair

【苦口婆心】kǔ kǒu pó xīn

advice sb time and again in earnest words and with

good intention/ be faithful and kind in remonstrance

【苦心孤诣】kǔ xīn gū yì

drive oneself mercilessly to attain one's goal/ make notable achievement after extraordinarily persistent and painstaking efforts

【苦心经营】kǔ xīn jīng yíng

contrive painstakingly/ work out with unsparing efforts/ elaboration

【夸大其词】kuā dà qí cí

make an overstatement/ exaggerate

【夸夸其谈】kuā kuā qí tán

indulge in verbiage (or exaggeration)/ talk big (or tall)/ bombastic twaddle/ bragging/ boastfulness

【快刀斩乱麻】kuài dāo zhǎn luàn má

cut a tangled skein of jute with a sharp knife — make a lightning decision/ cut the Gordian knot/ take a bold and decisive step

【快马加鞭】kuài mǎ jiā biān

whip the galloping horse on — work at top speed/ spur the flying horse to full speed/ with whip and spur/ posthaste

【脍炙人口】kuài zhì rén kǒu

(of good food) popular and much relished; pleasant to eat/ (of a piece of good writing) win universal praise; enjoy great popularity/ (of literary works) be often and widely quoted; please all tastes



【宽打窄用】kuān dǎ zhǎi yòng

budget liberally and spend sparingly

【宽大为怀】kuān dà wéi huái

be magnanimous or lenient (with an offender)/

broad-minded/ liberal-minded/ clemency

【宽宏大量】kuān hóng dà liàng

broad-minded and generous/ large-minded/ magnanimous

【狂风暴雨】kuáng fēng bào yǔ

a nasty (violent, fierce or furious) storm/ a windy downpour/ the fury of the elements/ tempest

【狂妄自大】kuáng wàng zì dà

arrogant and conceited

【旷日持久】kuàng rì chí jiǔ

last for a long time/ long-drawn-out/ protracted/ prolonged/ be time-consuming

【岿然不动】kuī rán bù dòng

steadfastly stand one's ground/ remain as firm as a rock/ lofty and unshakable

【窥测方向,以求一逞】kuī cè fāng xiàng, yǐ qiú yī chěng

spy out the land in order to accomplish one's schemes/ see how the wind blows in order to achieve one's evil ends

【溃不成军】kuī bù chéng jūn

(of an army) be utterly routed/ be completely de-

feated/ be put to rout

【困惑不解】kùn huò bù jiě

feel puzzled/ get into knots

【困兽犹斗】kùn shòu yóu dòu

even a trapped beast struggles — one fights to the death in desperation/ cornered beasts will still fight/ beasts at bay will put up a desperate fight/ the crushed worm will turn

## L

【拉大旗作虎皮】lā dà qí zuò hǔ pí

use the great banner as a tiger-skin (to cover oneself and intimidate other people)/ drape oneself in the flag to impress people

【来而不往非礼也】lái ér bù wǎng fēi lǐ yě

it is impolite not to give after receiving (or not to pay a return call on sb)/ it is impolite not to reciprocate/ one should return as good as one receives

【来龙去脉】lái lóng qù mài

sequence of events (actions)/ origin and development/ cause and effect/ the ins and outs (of a matter)/ context

【来日方长】lái rì fāng cháng

there are many days yet to provide for (or think

about)/ there will be ample time

【来者不拒】lái zhě bù jù

all comers are welcome/ refuse nobody (or nobody's request or offer)/ keep door open

【来者不善,善者不来】lái zhě bù shàn, shàn zhě bù lái

those who have come are not friendly, those who are friendly have not come/ he who has come is surely strong or he'd never have come along

【来踪去迹】lái zōng qù jī

traces of sth/ traces of sb's whereabouts

【癞蛤蟆想吃天鹅肉】lái há ma xiǎng chī tiān é ròu

a toad lusting after a swan's flesh — aspiring after sth one is not worthy of

【滥竽充数】làn yú chōng shù

pass oneself off as one of the players in an ensemble — be there just to make up the number (used of incompetent people or inferior goods)/ just to fill up a vacancy/ hold a post without qualification/ act as a stop-gap

【狼狈不堪】láng bèi bù kān

in an extremely awkward position/ in an embarrassing situation/ in sore straits/ be in a sorry (pitiable or wretched) plight/ like a drowned rat/ totally helpless/ utterly disconcerted

【狼狈为奸】láng bèi wéi jiān

act in collusion with each other/ be banded together  
in collusion/ collude in doing evil/ join in a conspira-  
cy (or villainy)/ be partners in crime/ work hand in  
glove with...

【狼奔豕突】láng bēn shǐ tū

run like wolves and rush like boars — (of bandits) in-  
fest and harass about

【狼吞虎咽】láng tūn hǔ yàn

eat like a wolf or a tiger/ wolf down/ devour  
ravenously/ eat voraciously/ gobble up/ make a pig  
of oneself/ gorge/ gormandize

【狼心狗肺】láng xīn gǒu fèi

rapacious as a wolf and savage as a cur/ completely  
without conscience/ cruel and unscrupulous/ brutal  
and coldblooded/ of cruel and fierce disposition/  
wickhearted/ ungrateful

【狼子野心】láng zǐ yě xīn

designs of (the) wolves and wolfish nature — (of a  
person) greedy, cruel and full of wild ambitions

【牢不可破】láo bù kě pò

indestructible/ unbreakable/ impregnable

【劳而无功】láo ér wú gōng

work hard but to no avail/ work fruitlessly/ toil with  
no gain/ lost labour (or labour lost)

【劳苦功高】láo kǔ gōng gāo

have worked hard and performed a valuable service/

with toilsome labour and distinctive merits

【劳民伤财】*láo mǐn shāng cái*

tire the people and drain the treasury/ waste of manpower and public funds

【劳逸结合】*láo yì jié hé*

strike a proper balance between work and leisure/ alternate work with rest and recreation/ proper arrangement of work and rest

【老成持重】*lǎo chéng chí zhòng*

(of a person) well-experienced and prudent/ capable and reliable

【老当益壮】*lǎo dāng yì zhuàng*

old but vigorous/ more vigorous with age/ enjoy a green old age/ there's many a good tune played on an old fiddle

【老骥伏枥，志在千里】*lǎo jì fú lì, zhì zài qiān lǐ*

a veteran thoroughbred tied to its stable still dreams of the wilds — a man of action, temporarily lying low, has yet ambitions unfulfilled/ an old steed in the stable still aspires to gallop a thousand *li* — old people may still cherish high aspirations

【老奸巨猾】*lǎo jiān jù huá*

an old hand at trickery and deception/ an old, crafty person/ a past master of machination and manoeuvre/ an old fox/ a sly old fish

【老马识途】*lǎo mǎ shí tú*

the old horse knows the way — (of experienced



people) know the ropes/ an old hand is a good guide/  
the devil knows many things because he is old

【老谋深算】lǎo móu shēn suàn

make every move only after mature deliberation/ cir-  
cumspect and farseeing/ experienced and astute

【老气横秋】lǎo qì héng qiū

showing self-importance of the aged/ arrogant on ac-  
count of one's seniority/ lacking in youthful vigour

【老生常谈】lǎo shēng cháng tán

the platitudes of an old scholar/ Sunday school  
truth/ a platitude/ an old story/ ordinary or usual

【老鼠过街，人人喊打】lǎo shǔ guò jiē, rén rén hǎn dǎ

when a rat runs across the street, everybody cries,  
“Kill it!” (said of a person or thing hated by every-  
one)

【老态龙钟】lǎo tài lóng zhōng

old men's manners or appearance/ senility/ senile/  
doddering

【老羞成怒】lǎo xiū chéng nù

fly into a rage out of shame/ be shamed into anger/  
turn angry from embarrassment/ angry at one's hu-  
miliation

【乐不可支】lè bù kě zhī

overwhelmed with joy/ extremely happy/ overjoyed

【乐不思蜀】lè bù sī shǔ

indulge in pleasure and forget home and duty/ so  
happy as to be unwilling to return home

【乐极生悲】lè jí shēng bēi

extreme joy begets sorrow (or gives rise to sadness)/  
drunken days have all their tomorrows

【乐善好施】lè shàn hào shī

be prodigal of benefactions

【雷厉风行】léi lì fēng xíng

(in carrying out policies, etc.) with thunder-like vio-  
lence and wind-like swiftness/ resolute enforcement  
(of orders, laws, etc.) in a sweeping manner/ vigor-  
ously and effectively

【雷声大,雨点小】léi shēng dà, yǔ diǎn xiǎo

loud thunder but small raindrops/ much said but lit-  
tle done/ much (or great) cry and little wool/ great  
boast, small roast/ the mountain has brought forth a  
mouse

【雷霆万钧】léi tíng wàn jūn

as powerful as a thunderbolt/ with the force of a  
thunderbolt

【冷嘲热讽】lěng cháo rè fěng

freezing irony and burning (or scorching) satire/ rant  
and rave/ give sb a dig/ sarcasm

【冷若冰霜】lěng ruò bīng shuāng

as cold as ice/ frosty in manner/ be made of ice

【冷言冷语】lěng yán lěng yǔ

mocking words/ sarcastic comments/ ironical remarks/ cold words

【冷眼旁观】lěng yǎn páng guān

stand aloof and look on with cold indifference/ look at coldly from the side-lines/ look on as a disinterested bystander/ take a cool look at/ look on with a critical eye

【离经叛道】lí jīng pàn dào

depart from the classics and rebel against orthodoxy/ be heretical and deviate from the true teachings/ be guilty of heterodoxy/ wayward and rebellious

【离群索居】lí qún suǒ jū

live alone, cut off from society/ live the life of a recluse/ live out of the world/ live in solitude/ live within oneself/ keep oneself to oneself/ plough a lonely furrow

【离题万里】lí tí wàn lǐ

too far afield/ go wide of the mark/ far from the mark/ be all abroad

【离乡背井】lí xiāng bèi jǐng

leave one's native place (against one's will)/ leave one's native district

【离心离德】lí xīn lí dé

dissension and discord/ disunity

【礼尚往来】lǐ shàng wǎng lái

courtesy demands reciprocation/ etiquette requires reciprocity/ deal with a man as he deals with you/pay

a man back in his own coin

【李代桃僵】lǐ dài táo jiāng

palm off a substitute for the real thing/ substitute one thing for another/ change this for that/ sacrifice oneself for another person

【里应外合】lǐ yīng wài hé

attack the enemy from within in coordination with operations from without/ collaborate from within with forces from without/ work in collusion, one from without and the other from within

【理屈词穷】lǐ qū cí qióng

shut up when defeated in argument/ have nothing more to say on finding oneself devoid of all argument/ fall silent when having nothing left to justify oneself/ be condemned out of one's own showing

【理所当然】lǐ suǒ dāng rán

it's only right and proper/ it goes without saying/ as it ought to be/ in accordance with what is right/ both natural and right/ as a matter of course

【理直气壮】lǐ zhí qì zhuàng

be self-confident on the strength of one's righteousness/ with justice on one's side, one is bold and assured/ be in the right and self-confident

【力不从心】lì bù cóng xīn

the ability falling short of one's wishes/ the strength not equal to the will (or ambitions)/ be unable to do as well as one would wish to do/ the spirit is willing,

but the flesh is weak

【力不胜任】lì bù shèng rén

without the required ability to undertake a given task/ be unequal to one's task/ beyond one's capacity

【力排众议】lì pái zhòng yì

prevail over all dissenting views/ stand (or hold) one's ground/ strongly dissent

【力所不及】lì suǒ bù jí

above (beyond or out of) one's reach/ not within one's power/ beyond one's tether

【力所能及】lì suǒ néng jí

within one's power/ do everything in one's power/ to the full extent of one's capabilities/ to the best of one's ability (or power)/ within one's reach

【力挽狂澜】lì wǎn kuáng lán

make vigorous efforts to turn the tide/ strive to retrieve a critical situation/ save a dangerous situation with one's utmost efforts

【力争上游】lì zhēng shàng yóu

endeavor to gain the upper hand/ advance by vigorous effort/ aim high

【历历在目】lì lì zài mù

clearly reappear before one's eyes/ leap up vividly before the eyes/ come clearly into view/ (of past memories) clearly recalled to one's mind

【厉兵秣马】lì bīng mò mǎ

sharpen the weapons and feed the horses — get ready for battle

【立竿见影】lì gān jiàn yǐng

set up a pole and see its shadow — get instant results/ a shadow is cast as soon as a pole is raised — produce an immediate effect

【立功赎罪】lì gōng shú zuì

perform meritorious services to atone for one's crimes

【立身处世】lì shēn chǔ shì

how to get along with people/ ways of conducting oneself in society

【立于不败之地】lì yú bù bài zhī dì

establish oneself in an unassailable position/ make one's position impregnable/ remain invincible (or unconquerable)

【立锥之地】lì zhuī zhī dì

“the place to stick an awl” — a tiny bit of land

【立足之地】lì zú zhī dì

a standing (place)/ standing-room/ a foothold

【励精图治】lì jīng tú zhì

strengthen the spirit (or brace oneself up) and run one's country well/ rouse oneself for vigorous efforts to make the country strong and prosperous

【利害攸关】lì hài yǒu guān

have a stake in (sth)/ closely bound up with

【利令智昏】lì lìng zhì hūn

be blinded by the lust for gain/ be purblind owing to  
one's inordinate ambition/ be mesmerized by money

【利欲熏心】lì yù xūn xīn

be blinded by greed/ be lured by the desire of profits/  
be overcome by covetousness/ be possessed with (or  
by) a lust for gain

【联翩而至】lián piān ér zhì

arrive in close succession

【连篇累牍】lián piān lěi dú

reiterate again and again/ one article after another/  
pages and pages/ lengthy and tedious/ at great  
length/ floods of ink/ long-winded

【恋恋不舍】liàn liàn bù shě

reluctant to part with/ unable to part from/ unwill-  
ing to give up

【良辰美景】liáng chén měi jǐng

beautiful scene on a bright day

【良师益友】liáng shī yì yǒu

good teachers and helpful (or worthy) friends

【良药苦口】liáng yào kǔ kǒu

good medicine tastes bitter/ bitter pills may have  
wholesome effects/ good advice, like medicine, is  
hard to take

【良药苦口利于病, 忠言逆耳利于行】liáng yào kǔ kǒu lì  
yú bìng, zhōng yán nì ěr lì yú xíng

just as bitter medicine cures sickness, so unpalatable  
advice benefits conduct

L

【良莠不齐】liáng yǒu bù qí

the good and the bad are intermingled

【梁上君子】liáng shàng jūn zǐ

“gentleman on the beam”—burglar/ thief

【两败俱伤】liǎng bài jù shāng

both sides suffer (or lose)/ neither side gains/ internecine

【两面三刀】liǎng miàn sān dāo

double-faced tactics/ play a double game/ play double/ double-dealing

【两面讨好】liǎng miàn tǎo hǎo

try to keep the favour of both sides in a dispute/ run with the hare and hunt with the hounds

【两全其美】liǎng quán qí měi

satisfy both parties/ satisfy rival claims/ keep the good points of both/ serve a twofold purpose

【两相情愿】liǎng xiāng qíng yuàn

both parties are willing/ both parties agree of free will/ mutual consent

【两小无猜】liǎng xiǎo wú cāi

(of a boy and a girl) be innocent playmates

【两袖清风】liǎng xiù qīng fēng

(of an official) have clean hands/ remain uncorrupted

【量材录用】liàng cái lù yòng

give one employment commensurate with his abilities/ give sb work suited to his abilities/ assign jobs to



people according to their talents

【量力而行】liàng lì ér xíng

do what one is capable of/ do what one's strength allows/ act according to one's ability

【量入为出】liàng rù wéi chū

keep expenditures within the limit of income/ base one's expenditure upon one's income/ live within one's means/ cut one's coat according to one's cloth/ make both ends meet

【聊胜于无】liáo shèng yú wú

a little is better than none/ it's better than nothing/ half a loaf is better than no bread

【聊以自慰】liáo yǐ zì wèi

just to console oneself/ comfort oneself with thought

【聊以卒岁】liáo yǐ zú suì

just to tide over the year

【寥寥无几】liáo liáo wú jǐ

only a few/ very few

【寥若晨星】liáo ruò chén xīng

as sparse as the morning stars/ few and far between

【燎原烈火】liáo yuán liè huǒ

a (blazing) prairie fire

【了如指掌】liǎo rú zhǐ zhǎng

as plain as pointing to the palm of the hand/ know sth like the palm of one's hand/ have sth at one's finger tips (or finger-ends)/ read (or know) like a book

**【料事如神】** liào shì rú shén

predict like a prophet/ foretell things with miraculous accuracy

**【劣迹昭著】** liè jī zhāo zhù

one's bad behavior (or reputation) is well known/ notorious

**【烈火见真金】** liè huǒ jiàn zhēn jīn

pure gold proves its worth in a blazing fire — people of worth show their mettle during trials and tribulations/ genuine gold fears no fire/ true blue will never stain

**【临别赠言】** lín bié zèng yán

words of advice at parting/ parting advice

**【临机应变】** lín jī yìng biàn

adapt to (changing) circumstances/ cope with any contingency/ decide as situation demands

**【临渴掘井】** lín kě jué jǐng

not dig a well until one is thirsty — not make timely preparations/ begin to dig a well when thirsty — lack of forethought/ do a thing at the 11th hour

**【临深履薄】** lín shēn lǚ bó

"as if on the brink of the abyss, as if treading on thin ice" — cautious

**【临危不惧】** lín wēi bù jù

face danger fearlessly/ remain calm in the face of a crisis/ be undaunted in the face of perils/ betray no

fear in an hour of danger

【临渊羡鱼，不如归而结网】lín yuān xiàn yú, bù rú guī ér jié wǎng

it's better to go back and make a net than to stand by the pond and long for fish—one should take practical steps to achieve one's aims

【临阵磨枪】lín zhèn mó qiāng

sharpen one's spear only before going into battle - start to prepare only at the last moment/ rub one's gun when battle begins—hastily make preparations when the matter is at hand

【临阵脱逃】lín zhèn tuō táo

flee (or run away) on the eve of a battle/ sneak away at a critical juncture/ hightail it off at the first contact with the enemy

【淋漓尽致】lín lí jìn zhì

most incisively and vividly/ thoroughly

【琳琅满目】lín láng mǎn mù

(a multitude of beautiful things) dazzle the eye/ a superb collection of beautiful things/ a feast for the eyes

【鳞次栉比】lín cì zhì bǐ

in orderly rows, like scales on a fish or the teeth of a comb/ row upon row of

【灵丹圣药】líng dān shèng yào

miraculous cure/ panacea/ heal-all/ catholicon



**【伶牙俐齿】**líng yá lì chǐ

have the gift of the gab/ have a glib tongue/ fluent of speech/ sharp-tongued

**【零敲碎打】**líng qiāo suī dǎ

do sth bit by bit, off and on/ adopt a piecemeal approach

**【另起炉灶】**lìng qǐ lú zào

“set up a separate kitchen” — make a fresh start/ start all over again

**【另眼相看】**lìng yǎn xiāng kàn

regard (or look up to) sb with special respect/ pay special regard to/ see sb in a new light

**【令人发指】**lìng rén fà zhǐ

one so angry that “make one’s hair stands on end”/ get one’s hair up/ make one’s blood boil

**【令人神往】**lìng rén shén wǎng

cause sb to have a strong desire for/ cause one to crave for

**【令人作呕】**lìng rén zuò ǒu

make one sick/ nauseating/ revolting/ disgusting/ mawkish

**【令行禁止】**lìng xíng jìn zhǐ

every order is executed without fail/ strict enforcement of orders and prohibitions

**【溜之大吉】**liū zhī dà jí

make oneself scarce/sneak away/slink off (or away)/

show one's heels/ show a clean pair of heels/ take to one's heels/ seek safety in flight

【留得青山在，不愁没柴烧】liú dé qīng shān zài, bù chōu méi chái shāo

as long as the green mountains are there one need not worry about firewood — while there is life there is hope/ as long as green hills remain there'll never be a shortage of firewood

【留有余地】liú yǒu yú dì

leave some ground/ leave some leeway/ allow for unforeseen circumstances

【流芳百世】liú fāng bǎi shì

hand down a good reputation to a hundred future generations/ leave a good name to posterity/ have a niche in the temple of fame/ be immortalized

【流离失所】liú lí shī suǒ

become destitute and homeless/ be forced to leave one's home and wander about/ displaced

【流离转徙】liú lí zhuǎn xǐ

migratory life of a refugee/ vagrant (life)

【流连忘返】liú lián wàng fǎn

enjoy oneself so much as to forget to go home/ indulge in pleasures and forget to go back home/ linger on, forgetting to return

【流水不腐，户枢不蠹】liú shuǐ bù fǔ, hù shū bù dù

running water is never stale and a door-hinge never



gets worm-eaten/ practice keeps one fit/ the used key  
is always bright

【流言蜚语】liú yán fēi yǔ

rumours and slanders/ rumours and gossip/ lies and  
slanders/ derogatory remarks

【六亲不认】liù qīn bù rèn

turn one's back on one's own flesh and blood/ refuse  
to have anything to do with all one's relatives

【六神无主】liù shén wú zhǔ

"all six vital organs failing to function"—in a state of  
utter stupefaction

【龙飞凤舞】lóng fēi fèng wǔ

like dragons flying and phoenixes dancing—lively and  
vigorous flourishes in calligraphy

【龙盘虎踞】lóng pán hǔ jù

like a coiling dragon and crouching tiger—a forbid-  
ding strategic point

【龙潭虎穴】lóng tán hǔ xué

dragon's pond and tiger's cave—dangerous places

【龙腾虎跃】lóng téng hǔ yuè

dragons rising and tigers leaping—a scene of bustling  
activity/ do sth with vigour enthusiasm

【龙争虎斗】lóng zhēng hǔ dòu

fierce struggle between two evenly-matched oppo-  
nents/ a near match/ a close game

【漏洞百出】lòu dòng bǎi chū

full of loopholes

【露出马脚】lòu chū mǎ jiǎo

the horse's hoof shows -- the plot is out/ show the colven hoof (or foot)/ let the cat out of the bag/ give the game away

【庐山真面】lú shān zhēn miàn

"what Lushan Mountain really looks like" -- the truth about a person or matter/ one's true colours

【炉火纯青】lú huǒ chún qīng

the pure blue flame -- high degree of one's technical proficiency and perfection of one's learning

【鲁莽灭裂】lǔ mǎng miè liè

rash and careless/ go it blind/ ride blind

【鹿死不择音】lù sǐ bù zé yīn

a stricken deer has no time to select its retreat -- a man hard pressed cannot be particular about whom to follow

【鹿死谁手】lù sǐ shuí shǒu

"at whose hand will the deer die" -- who will win the prize/ who will gain supremacy

【绿林好汉】lǜ lín hǎo hàn

heroes of greenwood (of Robin Hood type)/ forest outlaws/ a band of bandits entrenched in a mountain stronghold/ gentleman of the pad

【碌碌无能】lù lù wú néng

devoid of ability/ incompetent

【路遥知马力，事久见人心】lù yáo zhī mǎ lì, shì jiǔ



jiàn rén xīn

as a long road tests a horse's strength, so a long task  
proves a person's heart

【戮力同心】lū lì tóng xīn

pull together and work hard as a team/ make concert-  
ed efforts/ unite in a concerted effort

【驴唇不对马嘴】lū chún bù duì mǎ zuǐ

"a donkey's lips do not match a horse's jaws"—incon-  
gruous/ irrelevant

【驴鸣狗吠】lū míng gǒu fèi

"like asses braying and dogs barking"—poor style of  
writing

【旅进旅退】lǚ jìn lǚ tuì

always follow the steps of others, forward or back-  
ward—have no definite views of one's own

【屡次三番】lǚ cì sān fān

again and again/ time and again/ over and over a-  
gain/ many times/ repeatedly

【屡见不鲜】lǚ jiàn bù xiǎn

encountered with many times/ it is often seen/ noth-  
ing new/ common occurrence

【屡教不改】lǚ jiào bù gǎi

refuse (or fail) to mend one's ways after repeated  
warnings (or admonition)/ refuse to correct one's er-  
rors despite repeated education

【屡试不爽】lǚ shì bù shuǎng



stand (bear or pass) repeated tests/ time-tested

【履险如夷】lǚ xiǎn rú yí

cross a dangerous pass as easily as walking on level ground-handle a crisis without difficulty

【乱七八糟】luàn qī bā zāo

at sixes and sevens/ in a mess (or litter)/ in a muddle/ in confusion/ in great disorder/ a pretty (or nice) kettle of fish/ topsy-turvy/ rough-and-tumble/ pell-mell/ higgledy-piggledy

【略见一斑】lüè jiàn yī bān

see a sample of (sth)/ catch a glimpse of/ get a rough idea of

【略胜一筹】lüè shèng yī chóu

a notch (or cut) above/ slightly better/ just a little better/ one too many (or too much) for sb/ be one-up on (sb)/ preferable

【论功行赏】lùn gōng xíng shǎng

dispense rewards (or honours) according to one's merit/ award people according to their contributions

【罗雀掘鼠】luó què jué shǔ

"net birds and dig out rats" — contrive ways and means to live when in straits

【络绎不绝】luò yì bù jué

coming and going in an endless stream/ form a continuous stream/ unending

【落花流水】luò huā liú shuǐ

like the fallen flowers carried away by flowing water  
— utterly routed/ be shattered to pieces/ beat (or  
knock) sb to fits/ beat sb hollow (all hollow or all to  
pieces)

【落花有意，流水无情】luò huā yǒu yì, liú shuǐ wú qíng  
shedding petals, the waterside flower pines for love,  
while the heartless brook babbles on — unrequited  
love

【落荒而走】luò huāng ér zǒu  
take to the wilds — be defeated and flee the battle-  
field/ take to flight

【落井下石】luò jǐng xià shí  
drop stones on a man who has fallen into a well —  
take a mean advantage/ throw rocks in after sb has  
fallen into a well (or trap) — strike (or hit) a person  
when he is down

【落落大方】luò luò dà fāng  
natural and graceful/ carry oneself gracefully

【落落寡合】luò luò guǎ hé  
standoffish/ unsociable/ aloof

【落拓不羁】luò tuò bù jī  
unconventional and uninhibited

## M

## 【麻痹大意】má bì dà yì

lower one's guard and become careless/ lack of vigilance/ slacken in vigilance/ drop one's guard/ be off one's guard

## 【麻木不仁】má mù bù rén

indifferent and apathetic/ lacking feeling or sensitivity/ dead (or lost) to all feeling/ insensitive/ benumbed

## 【麻雀虽小, 肝胆俱全】má què suī xiǎo, gān dǎn jù quán

the sparrow may be small but it has all the vital organs—small but complete

## 【马不停蹄】mǎ bù tíng tí

hurried journey without stop/ without a stop/ non-stop

## 【马到成功】mǎ dào chéng gōng

win a success immediately upon arrival/ be accomplished instantly/ gain an immediate victory

## 【马革裹尸】mǎ gé guǒ shī

be wrapped in a horse's hide after death—die on the battle field

## 【马马虎虎】mǎ mǎ hū hū

in a slap-dash manner/ sloppily/ carelessly/ perfunctory/ not so bad/ just passable/ so-so



**【蚂蚁啃骨头】** mǎ yǐ kěn gú tóu

“ants gnawing at a bone”—a concentration of small machines on a big job/ plot away at a big job bit by bit

**【埋头苦干】** mái tóu kǔ gàn

immerse oneself quietly in hard work/ engage oneself in unostentatious hard work/ quietly put one's shoulder to the wheel/ hammer (at)

**【买空卖空】** mǎi kōng mài kōng

speculate (-tion) on the rise and fall of prices (or in stocks)

**【卖剑买牛】** mài jiàn mǎi niú

selling one's swords to purchase oxen for farming—reformation of brigands/ beat swords into ploughshares

**【卖身投靠】** mài shēn tóu kào

barter away one's honour for sb's patronage/ basely offer to serve the enemy

**【蛮横无理】** mán héng wú lǐ

impervious to reason/ rude and unreasonable/ peremptory and untenable

**【瞒天过海】** mán tiān guò hǎi

cross the sea under camouflage (or by a trick)—practise deception

**【满不在乎】** mǎn bù zài hū

not care in the least/ not worry at all/ give (or take)

no heed

【满城风雨】mǎn chéng fēng yǔ

(news) spread all over the city/ (news) raise a colossal uproar like a storm over the whole city/ become the talk of the town

【满腹经纶】mǎn fù jīng lún

profoundly learned and talented

【满腹牢骚】mǎn fù láo sāo

full of grievances/ full of resentment/ be querulous

【满谷满坑】mǎn gǔ mǎn kēng

in large numbers/ in great abundance/ in plenty

【满面春风】mǎn miàn chūn fēng

a face shining with pleasure/ beaming with satisfaction/ radiant with happiness

【满腔热忱】mǎn qiāng rè chén

filled with ardour and sincerity/ in the fullness of one's heart/ in all earnestness/ with zeal/ with warmth and enthusiasm

【满园春色】mǎn yuán chūn sè

the whole garden is filled with the beauties of spring — a picture of prosperity/ a garden full of the beauty of spring/ the beauties of spring please the eye everywhere

【满载而归】mǎn zài ér guī

return fully loaded/ come back with fruitful results/ return from a rewarding journey

【满招损，谦受益】mǎn zhāo sǔn, qiān shòu yì

one loses by pride and gains by modesty/ pride leads to loss (or downfall) while modesty brings benefit

【漫不经心】màn bù jīng xīn

totally unconcerned (or inattentive)/ with indifference/ wanting in care/ careless/ unmindful/ casual/ negligent/ nonchalant/ inattentively

【漫山遍野】màn shān biàn yě

all over the mountains and plains/ up the hills and down the fields/ over hill and dale

【慢条斯理】màn tiáo sī lǐ

at a slack pace/ at a snail's gallop (or pace)/ very slowly/ an easy manner/ leisurely/ unhurriedly

【芒刺在背】máng cǐ zài bèi

having prickles on the back—of a man who sits stiffly and ill at ease/ feel prickles down on one's back—feel nervous and uneasy

【忙里偷闲】máng lǐ tōu xián

snatch a little leisure from a busy life

【盲人摸象】máng rén mō xiàng

the blind men feel about the elephant and each of them holds his own opinion—one-sided view/ like the blind men trying to size up the elephant—take a part for the whole

【盲人瞎马】máng rén xiā mǎ

a blind person riding a blind horse—rushing headlong

to an immediate danger

【茫无头绪】máng wú tóu xù

(of a thing) be confused like a tangle of flax/ (of a person) not know where to begin

【猫哭老鼠】māo kū lǎo shǔ

the cat weeping over the dead mouse—shed crocodile tears

【毛骨悚然】máo gǔ sǒng rán

with one's hair standing on end/ with every hair erect/ make one's flesh creep/ make one's blood run cold/ freeze sb's blood/ have goose flesh/ horror-stricken

【毛手毛脚】máo shǒu máo jiǎo

careless (in handling things)/ clumsy-handed/ imprudent

【毛遂自荐】máo suì zì jiàn

offer one's services as Mao Sui (of the Warring States Period) did — volunteer one's services/ self-recommendation for a post or task

【冒名顶替】mào míng dǐng tì

take another's place by assuming his name

【冒天下之大不韪】mào tiān xià zhī dà bù wěi

defy world opinion/ risk (disregard or face) universal condemnation/ fly in the face of the will of the people/ be against the world

【貌合神离】mào hé shén lí

(of two persons or parties) seemingly in harmony

but actually at variance/ one in appearance but each  
going his own way/ apparently of one accord but di-  
vided in heart/ apparently acquiescing while con-  
trary-minded/ friends in name or appearance only

【眉飞色舞】méi fēi sè wǔ

with dancing eyebrows and a radiant face — enrapt-  
ured/ look of exultation/ exultantly

【眉开眼笑】méi kāi yǎn xiào

beaming with joy/ be all smiles

【眉来眼去】méi lái yǎn qù

make eyes at each other/ flirt with each other

【眉毛胡子一把抓】méi mao hú zi yī bǎ zhuā

try to grasp the eyebrows and the beard all at once —  
try to attend to big and small matters all at once

【眉清目秀】méi qīng mù xiù

have delicate features/ beautiful/ handsome

【眉头一皱,计上心来】méi tóu yī zhòu, jì shàng xīn lái

knit the brows and a stratagem comes to mind

【每逢佳节倍思亲】měi féng jiā jié bèi sī qīn

on festive occasions more than ever we think of our  
dear ones far away

【每况愈下】měi kuàng yù xià

get worse every time/ go from bad to worse/ steadily  
deteriorate/ be on the downgrade/ go down the  
drain/ from smoke into smother



**【美不胜收】** měi bù shèng shōu

too beautiful to be absorbed all at once/ so many beautiful things that one simply can't take them all in

**【美中不足】** měi zhōng bù zú

some slight imperfection (or regret)/ a blemish in an otherwise perfect thing/ a fly in the ointment/ crumpled rose-leaf/ cloud on one's happiness

**【门当户对】** mén dāng hù duì

be well-matched in social and economic status (for marriage)/ well-matched — of a matrimonial alliance

**【门户之见】** mén hù zhī jiàn

sectarian views (or bias)/ parochial (or party) prejudice/ sectarianism

**【门可罗雀】** mén kě luó què

you can catch sparrows on the doorstep — where visitors are few and far between/ birds may be snared at the door — of a deserted house

**【门庭若市】** mén tíng ruò shì

the courtyard is as crowded as a marketplace — a much visited house

**【扪心自问】** mén xīn zì wèn

examine one's own conscience and ask oneself/ search one's heart/ introspect

**【蒙头转向】** měng tóu zhuàn xiàng

lose one's bearings/ be utterly confused

**【蒙混过关】** méng hùn guò guān

gloss over one's faults/ sneak away in the confusion/  
get by under false pretences/ steal away/ slip by (or  
through)

**【蒙昧无知】** méng mèi wú zhī

be wrapped in the night of ignorance (or barbarism)/  
childish ignorance/ unenlightened/ illiterate

**【蒙在鼓里】** méng zài gǔ lǐ

be kept inside a drum — be kept in the dark

**【梦幻泡影】** mèng huàn pào yǐng

like a dream and a bubble's shadow/ a sheer illusion/  
utterly visionary/ pipedream

**【梦寐以求】** mèng mèi yǐ qiú

crave sth so that one even dreams about it/ try to  
find even in sleep/ long (or yearn) for sth day and  
night/ dream of/ long cherished

**【弥天大谎】** mí tiān dà huǎng

a monstrous (thundering or outrageous) lie

**【弥天大罪】** mí tiān dà zuì

a crime that fills the universe/ crimes that make  
stones cry out/ monstrous (deadly, towering, horri-  
ble, heinous or vicious) crimes

**【迷人眼目】** mí rén yǎn mù

fool people/ throw dust in sb's eyes

**【迷途知返】** mí tú zhī fǎn

become aware of one's errors and return from one's

wrong path/ realize one's errors and mend one's ways/ recover one's bearings and return to the fold/ return to the correct path

【米珠薪桂】mǐ zhū xīn guì

rice is as precious as pearls and firewood as costly as cassia — exorbitantly high cost of living

【靡靡之音】mǐ mǐ zhī yīn

decadent music

【秘而不宣】mì ér bù xuān

keep sth secret/ not let anyone into secret/ keep a matter dark

【密云不雨】mì yún bù yǔ

dense clouds but no rain — a trouble is brewing

【绵里藏针】mián lǐ cáng zhēn

a needle hidden in silk floss — a ruthless character behind a gentle appearance/ a needle in wool — a soft appearance but dangerous heart/ an iron hand in a velvet glove



【勉为其难】miǎn wéi qí nán

manage to do a difficult job beyond one's reach/ undertake to do a difficult job as best one can

【面不改色】miàn bù gǎi sè

not change colour/ remain calm/ without turning a hair/ without batting an eyelid

【面红耳赤】miàn hóng ěr chì

emotionally excited, face reddens to the ears/be red in

the face/ blush up to the ears/ suffused with blushes/ be flushed

【面黄肌瘦】miàn huáng jī shòu

sallow and emaciated/ lean and haggard

【面面俱到】miàn miàn jù dào

attend to each and every aspect of a matter/ be in every way very attentive/ have every detail thought of

【面面相觑】miàn miàn xiāng qù

look at each other at a loss about what to do/ look at each other in astonishment (or blank dismay)/ gaze at each other in speechless despair

【面目可憎, 语言无味】miàn mù kě zēng, yǔ yán wú wèi

repulsive in appearance and flavourless in expression

【面目全非】miàn mù quán fēi

be changed or distorted beyond recognition/ all looks wrong or differently

【面目一新】miàn mù yī xīn

put a new face on/ take on an entirely new look/ present a completely new appearance/ assume (wear, put on or take on) a new aspect

【面如土色】miàn rú tǔ sè

look ashen/ look pale/ a ghastly livid countenance

【面授机宜】miàn shòu jī yí

personally instruct sb on the line of action to pursue/

give confidential briefing

【面无人色】miàn wú rén sè

look ghastly pale

【妙不可言】miào bù kě yán

too wonderful for words/ most intriguing

【妙趣横生】miào qù héng shēng

full of wit and humour/ very witty

【妙手回春】miào shǒu huí chūn

(of a doctor) effect a miraculous cure and bring the  
dying back to life/ a skilled man brings back the  
spring — (of a doctor) bring life back to a patient

【灭此朝食】miè cǐ zhāo shí

will not have breakfast until the enemy is wiped out  
— be anxious to finish off the enemy immediately

【灭顶之灾】miè dǐng zhī zāi

be buried beneath the waves/ be swamped/ be  
drowned

【灭绝人性】miè jué rén xìng

inhuman/ cannibalistic/ barbarous/ savage

【民不聊生】mín bù liáo shēng

the people have no means of livelihood/ the people  
are utterly destitute/ the masses live in dire poverty/  
make life impossible for the people/ live on the edge  
of starvation

【民不畏死，奈何以死惧之】mín bù wèi sǐ, nài hé yǐ sǐ  
jù zhī

the people fear no death, why threaten them with it?

【民穷财尽】mín qióng cái jìn

the people suffer privation and the country has depleted its resources/ a complete bankruptcy

【民生凋敝】mín shēng diāo bì

the people live in destitution/ a mass impoverishment

【民以食为天】mín yǐ shí wéi tiān

the masses regard sufficient food as their heaven/ food is the first necessity

【民怨沸腾】mín yuàn fèi téng

the people are boiling with resentment/ seething popular discontent (resentment)

【民脂民膏】mín zhī mín gāo

flesh and blood of the people/ the fat of the people/ the people's life-blood

【名不副实】míng bù fù shí

the reality does not correspond to its name/ the reputation falls short of the reality/ the title and the reality do not tally/ be sth more in name than in reality/ be unworthy of the name or title

【名不虚传】míng bù xū chuán

have a well-deserved reputation/ deserve the reputation one enjoys/ live up to one's reputation/ true to the fame

【名垂青史】míng chuí qīng shǐ

go down in history/ be crowned with eternal glory

【名存实亡】míng cún shí wáng

cease to exist except in name/ exist in name only/  
non-existent except in name

【名副其实】míng fù qí shí

the name matches the reality/ be sth in reality as well  
as in name/ be worthy of the name/ one's reputation  
is justified/ true to one's name

【名缰利锁】míng jiāng lì suǒ

the bondage of reputation and wealth

【名利双收】míng lì shuāng shōu

win fame and fortune/ gain both reputation and  
wealth

【名列前茅】míng liè qián máo

be among the best of the candidates/ come out in  
front/ come out (at the) top/ come to the fore

【名落孙山】míng luò sūn shān

fall behind Sun Shan (Who was last on the list of  
successful candidates)—fail in a civil examination

【名噪一时】míng zào yī shí

gain considerable fame among one's contemporaries

【名正言顺】míng zhèng yán shùn

be perfectly justifiable/ come within one's jurisdic-  
tion/ things called by their right names

【明辨是非】míng biàn shì fēi

make a clear distinction between right and wrong

【明察暗访】míng chá àn fǎng

observe publicly and investigate privately/ investi-  
gate openly and secretly

【明察秋毫】míng chá qiū háo

have eyes sharp enough to perceive an animal's autumn hair—be perceptive of the minutest detail/ able to see the fine down of birds in autumn/ capable of discovering the minutest detail in everything/ be able to penetrate deeply into all things/ see through a brick wall

【明察秋毫之末,而不见舆薪】míng chá qiū háo zhī mò, ér bù jiàn yú xīn

be sharp-sighted enough to perceive the tip of an animal's autumn hair but unable to see a cartload of firewood—see the minute details but miss the major issue

【明火执仗】míng huǒ zhí zhàng

carry torches and weapons in a robbery—conduct evil activities openly/ operate in broad daylight

【明来暗往】míng lái àn wǎng

have overt and covert contacts with sb

【明眸皓齿】míng móu hào chǐ

bright eyes and white teeth

【明目张胆】míng mù zhāng dǎn

in a bare-faced (or flagrant) way/ before one's very eyes/ openly and brazenly/ flagrantly

【明枪暗箭】míng qiāng àn jiàn

attack by overt and covert means/ both open and covert attacks

【明枪易躲,暗箭难防】míng qiāng yì duǒ, àn jiàn nán fáng



nán fáng

it is easy to dodge a spear in the open, but hard to guard against an arrow shot from hiding

【明若观火】míng ruò guān huǒ

as clear as looking at a fire/ as clear as day

【明日黄花】míng rì huáng huā

overblown blossoms — things that are stale and no longer of interest

【明效大验】míng xiào dà yàn

clinching proof of the effectiveness/ outstanding effect

【明修栈道, 暗渡陈仓】míng xiū zhàn dào, àn dù chén cāng

pretend to prepare to advance along one path while secretly going along another/ do one thing under cover of another

【明哲保身】míng zhé bǎo shēn

be worldly wise and play safe/ wise for personal survival

【明争暗斗】míng zhēng àn dòu

both open strife and veiled struggle/ fight with both open and secret means/ overt and covert struggle

【明知故犯】míng zhī gù fàn

commit (a crime or an offence) wilfully/ violate (the law or regulations) knowingly/ deliberately break (a rule, etc.)/ with open eyes (or with one's eyes open)/ a wilful offence/ do sth one knows is wrong

**【明知故问】** míng zhī gù wèn

one asks, but already knows/ ask while knowing the answer/ feign ignorance and ask questions

**【明珠暗投】** míng zhū àn tóu

cast pearls before swine—a talented man finds his ability unrecognized/ a bright pearl thrown into darkness—a valuable thing gained by a person who doesn't know it at all/ a good man fallen among bad company

**【明珠弹雀】** míng zhū tán què

shoot birds with pearls—the loss outweighs the gain

**【鸣鼓而攻之】** míng gǔ ér gōng zhī

sound the call for attack

**【鸣锣开道】** míng luó kāi dào

sound the gongs to clear the way (for officials in feudal times)/ pave (clear or smooth) the way for/ prepare the public for a coming event

**【鸣冤叫屈】** míng yuān jiào qū

complain and call for redress/ make bitter complaints/ voice grievances

**【冥思苦想】** míng sī kǔ xiǎng

think long and hard/ cudgel (or rack) one's brains

**【冥顽不灵】** míng wán bù líng

impenetrably thickheaded/ dull/ stupid

**【铭感终身】** míng gǎn zhōng shēn

remain deeply grateful for the rest of one's life

【铭记不忘】míng jì bù wàng

bear in mind/ be inscribed on one's memory/ be branded in one's memory/ be imprinted (or engraved) on one's mind/ be graven on one's heart

【酩酊大醉】mǐng dīng dà zuì

be dead drunk/ as drunk as a lord

【命在旦夕】mìng zài dàn xī

be on the verge of death/ be dying

【命中注定】mìng zhōng zhù dìng

decreed by fate/ predestined

【谬种流传】miù zhǒng liú chuán

the dissemination of error/ a school of bastard thoughts

【模棱两可】mó léng liǎng kě

ready to accept either course/ in an equivocal way/ cut both ways/ shift and hedge/ betwixt and between/ fence-sitting/ (just) on the line/ ambiguous

【摩肩接踵】mó jiān jiē zhǒng

shoulder to shoulder and closely upon heels/ jostle each other in a crowd/ be jam-packed with people

【摩厉以须】mó lì yǐ xū

grind weapons sharp in preparation

【摩拳擦掌】mó quán cā zhǎng

rub one's fists and wipe one's palms — be eager for a fight/ rub hands, clench fists in preparation for fight

(or hard work)/ roll (or turn) up one's sleeves for  
action/ be spoiling for a fight/ itch to have a go

【磨杵成针】mó chǔ chéng zhēn

an iron pestle can be ground down to a needle — per-  
severance will prevail/ little strokes fell great oaks

【没齿不忘】mò chǐ bù wàng

will never forget till all one's teeth are lost — remem-  
ber it throughout one's whole life/ will never forget  
to the end of one's days/ remember for the rest of  
one's life

【莫测高深】mò cè gāo shēn

unfathomable/ enigmatic

【莫此为甚】mò cǐ wéi shèn

nothing or nobody is capable of exceeding this/ one  
can expect nothing beyond this

【莫名其妙】mò míng qí miào

difficult to guess what it is all about/ ignorant of the  
heart of the matter/ unable to make head or tail of/  
without rhyme (or rime) or reason/ be all abroad/  
incomprehensible/ inexplicable/ baffling

【莫逆之交】mò nì zhī jiāo

friends with complete mutual understanding/ one's  
intimate friend/ bosom (close or sworn) friends

【莫衷一是】mò zhōng yī shì

unable to agree or decide which is right

【漠不关心】mò bù guān xīn

indifferent and apathetic/ totally unconcerned/ show no concern/ give short shrift/ nonchalant

【漠然置之】mò rán zhì zhī

remain indifferent towards sth/ look on with unconcern/ show (or express) no concern for/ hold loose

【墨守成规】mò shǒu chéng guī

stick to established practice/ stick to conventions (accustomed rules)/ stick in the mud/ follow the stereotype (or old) routine/ get into a groove/ move (or run) in a groove (or rut)/ stay in a rut/ go round like a horse in a mill/ methodism

【墨汁未干】mò zhī wèi gān

before the ink is dry/ when the ink is scarcely dry/ the ink was hardly dry before

【默默无闻】mò mò wú wén

be buried in oblivion/ unknown to the public/ be completely unknown or unrecognized/ without attracting public attention/ in the shade

【木本水源】mù běn shuǐ yuán

the root of wood and the source of water — the foundation or cause of things

【木已成舟】mù yǐ chéng zhōu

the wood is already made into a boat — too late to change/ what's done is done/ what is done cannot be undone/ the die is cast

【目不见睫】mù bù jiàn jié

the eye cannot see its lashes — lack of self-knowledge

【目不交睫】mù bù jiāo jié

not sleep a wink

【目不识丁】mù bù shí dīng

not know one's ABC/ be completely ignorant or illiterate/ uncultured/ unread

【目不暇给】mù bù xiá jǐ

the eye cannot take it all in/ too many things for the eye to see (or to take in)

【目不转睛】mù bù zhuǎn jīng

look with fixed eyes/ watch with the utmost concentration/ focus one's eyes on/ not to take (or tear) one's eyes off/ a fixed gaze

【目瞪口呆】mù dèng kǒu dāi

be stunned speechless/ stare at in mute amazement/ be struck dumb/ stand aghast at/ gaping/ stupefied/ dumbfounded

【目光如豆】mù guāng rú dòu

one's circle of vision is as large as a bean — very limited outlook/ myopic view of things/ not see beyond one's nose/ of narrow vision/ shortsighted

【目光如炬】mù guāng rú jù

eyes blazing like torches — blazing with anger/ looking ahead with wisdom/ farsighted

【目空一切】mù kōng yī qiè

consider the whole world is too mean for one's notice

— expression of pride and haughtiness/ be on (get on, mount or ride) the high horse/ with one's nose in the air/ full of conceit/ supercilious/ insolent

【目中无人】mù zhōng wú rén

consider everyone beneath one's notice/ get (or grow) too big for one's boots/ be overweening/ despising others/ far gone in pride/ supercilious

【暮鼓晨钟】mù gǔ chén zhōng

evening drum and morning bell in a monastery -- timely exhortations to virtue and purity

【暮气沉沉】mù qì chén chén

lethargic/ apathetic/ lifeless

## N

【拿手好戏】ná shǒu hǎo xì

a game or trick one is good at/ what one most excels in/ one's speciality/ one's forte/ masterpiece

【耐人寻味】nài rén xún wèi

afford (much) food for thought/ stand careful pondering on (or over)/ thought-provoking

【男盗女娼】nán dào nǚ chāng

behave like thieves and whores/ be out-and-out scoundrels

**【南柯一梦】** nán kē yī mèng

Nanke dream (from the story of a man who dreamed that he became governor of Nanke in the Kingdom of Ants) — illusory joy/ empty happiness/ fond dream

**【南腔北调】** nán qiāng běi diào

speak with a mixed accent

**【南辕北辙】** nán yuán běi zhé

try to go south by driving the chariot north — act in a way that defeats one's purpose/ head for the wrong direction/ diametrically opposite/ (as) wide as the poles apart

**【南征北战】** nán zhēng běi zhàn

fighting south and north on many fronts

**【难乎为继】** nán hū wéi jì

difficult to follow up/ hard to keep up

**【难解难分】** nán jiě nán fēn

be inextricably involved (in a dispute)/ be locked together (in a struggle)/ be sentimentally attached to each other

**【难能可贵】** nán néng kě guì

difficult of attainment, hence worthy of esteem/ deserving much praise for one's excellent performance or behaviour/ exceptionably commendable (or estimable)

**【难舍难分】** nán shě nán fēn

loath to part from each other



【难兄难弟】nán xiōng nán dì

two of a kind/ fellow sufferers

【难言之隐】nán yán zhī yǐn

sth which it would be awkward to disclose/ sth embarrassing to mention/ sth difficult to voice out/ sth which ails one in the mind and hard to state/ a secret which could not be told/ a painful topic

【喃喃自语】nán nán zì yǔ

mutter to oneself

【囊空如洗】náng kōng rú xǐ

with empty pockets/ penniless/ broke

【脑满肠肥】nǎo mǎn cháng féi

heavy-jowled and potbellied — the idle rich/ with a fair round belly and a swelled head

【内外交困】nèi wài jiāo kùn

beset with difficulties both at home and abroad/ be plagued by troubles internally and externally/ on the horns of a dilemma in internal and external affairs/ be in dire straits at home and abroad

【内忧外患】nèi yōu wài huàn

domestic trouble and foreign invasion

【能屈能伸】néng qū néng shēn

able to stoop or stand erect/ adaptable to circumstances

【能上能下】néng shàng néng xià

be ready to work both at the top or at the grass roots /



be ready to accept a higher or a lower post

【能说会道】néng shuō huì dào

have the gift of the gab/ have a glib tongue/ be a smart (or good) talker

【能文能武】néng wén néng wǔ

capable of handling both military and civilian affairs/  
be versed in both polite letters and martial arts/ be  
able to wield both the pen and the gun

【能者多劳】néng zhě duō láo

able people should do more work

【能者为师】néng zhě wéi shī

let those who know teach

【泥菩萨过河，自身难保】ní pú sà guò hé, zì shēn nán bǎo

like a clay idol fording a river — hardly able to save  
oneself (let alone anyone else)/ can't save oneself  
any more than a clay idol can save itself while cross-  
ing a river/ an idol of clay which can hardly survive  
when crossing a river

【泥牛入海】ní niú rù hǎi

disappear like a clay buffalo drowned at sea/ like a  
clay ox entering the sea — never to be heard of again;  
gone forever

【泥沙俱下】ní shā jù xià

mud and sand are carried away — there is a mingling  
of good and bad

【泥塑木雕】ní sù mù diāo

like an idol moulded in clay or carved in wood — as wooden as a dummy/ as modelled in clay or carved from wood

【你死我活】nǐ sǐ wǒ huó

life-and-death/ (a matter of) life or death

【你追我赶】nǐ zhuī wǒ gǎn

try to overtake each other in friendly emulation

【逆来顺受】nì lái shùn shòu

meekly submit to oppression, maltreatment, etc. / take insults philosophically/ resign oneself to adversity/ take the rough with the smooth/ with a resigned mind/ grin and bear it

【逆水行舟】nì shuǐ xíng zhōu

sail against the current (or in the head tide)/ row against the flood

【匿影藏形】nì yǐng cáng xíng

hide from public notice/ conceal one's identity/ sail under false colours/ lie low

【拈轻怕重】niān qīng pà zhòng

prefer the light to the heavy — pick easy jobs and shirk hard ones/ prefer the light and shirk the heavy

【年富力强】nián fù lì qiáng

in the prime of life/ in one's prime

【年高德劭】nián gāo dé shào

of venerable age and eminent virtue/ venerable in age



and character

【年轻力壮】nián qīng lì zhuàng

young and vigorous

【年深日久】nián shēn rì jiǔ

as the years go by/ with the passage of time

【念念不忘】niàn niàn bù wàng

bear in mind constantly

【鸟尽弓藏】niǎo jìn gōng cáng

cast aside the bow once the birds are gone — cast sb aside when he has served his purpose

【鸟语花香】niǎo yǔ huā xiāng

birds sing and flowers give forth their fragrance — characterizing a fine spring day

【捏手捏脚】niē shǒu niē jiǎo

walk gingerly/ walk on tiptoe

【宁缺毋滥】níng quē wú làn

rather go without than have sth shoddy — put quality before quantity/ would rather go without (sth) than be contented with anything less satisfactory

【宁死不屈】níng sǐ bù qū

rather die than submit (surrender or yield)/ prefer death to dishonour/ death before dishonour

【宁为鸡口，勿为牛后】níng wéi jī kǒu, wú wéi niú hòu

better be the head of a dog (or an ass) than the tail of a lion ( or horse ) / would rather be a leader anywhere

than a follower

【宁为玉碎，不为瓦全】 nǐng wéi yù suì, bù wéi wǎ quán

rather be a shattered vessel of jade than an unbroken piece of pottery — better to die in glory than survive with dishonour/ rather die on one's feet than live on one's knees/ rather die for a noble cause than continue to live a shameful life/ better be a piece of broken jade than an unbroken tile

【牛鬼蛇神】 niú guǐ shé shén

monsters and ghosts — forces of evil/ monsters and demons of all descriptions/ ogres of all kinds

【牛头不对马嘴】 niú tóu bù duì mǎ zuǐ

horses' jaws don't match cows' heads — incongruous/ things that don't agree/ irrelevant

【弄假成真】 nòng jiǎ chéng zhēn

what was make-believe has become reality/ fulfil what was promised in joke

【弄巧成拙】 nòng qiǎo chéng zhuō

in trying to be smart one makes himself look foolish/ try to be clever only to end up with a blunder/ get into trouble through clever means/ go for wool come home shorn/ outsmart oneself

【弄虚作假】 nòng xū zuò jiǎ

practise fraud/ employ trickery/ resort to deception

【奴颜婢膝】 nú yán bì xī



bend one's knees before sb/ sedulously fawn upon/ abjectly do sth to curry favour with/ lick sb's boots (feet, shoes or spittle)/ be subservient to/ be obsequious to/ slavish

【奴颜媚骨】nú yán mèi gǔ  
sycophancy or obsequiousness

【怒不可遏】nù bù kě è  
one's rage is beyond restraint/ be beside oneself with anger/ boil with rage/ lose control of one's temper

【怒发冲冠】nù fà chōng guān  
be so angry that one's hair raises (or lifts) up his hat/ the anger makes one's hair stand on end/ be in a towering rage (or passion)/ bristle with anger

【怒火中烧】nù huǒ zhōng shāo  
be burning with anger (or wrath)/ simmer with rage/ be filled with fury/ one's blood boils

【怒目相视】nù mù xiāng shì  
look at each other with angry eyes/ stare angrily/ eye each other angrily/ glare (or glower) at/ look daggers at

【怒气冲天】nù qì chōng tiān  
be in a towering rage (or passion)/ give way to unbridled fury/ fly into a passion

【怒形于色】nù xíng yú sè  
betray one's anger/ look angry/ angry countenance

O

【呕心沥血】ǒu xīn lì xuè

shed one's heart blood — make extremely painstaking efforts/ strain one's heart and mind/ work one's heart out

【偶一为之】ǒu yī wéi zhī

do sth by chance (by accident, once in a while or occasionally)

【藕断丝连】ǒu duàn sī lián

the lotus root snaps but its fibres stay joined — apparently severed, actually still connected/ the lotus root breaks, but the fibres hold together — the affection cannot be entirely severed/ not completely cut off/ still keep sth up

P

【拍案叫绝】pāi àn jiào jué

thump the table and shout “bravo!”

【拍板成交】pāi bǎn chéng jiāo



strike a bargain/ clinch a deal

【拍手称快】pāi shǒu chēng kuài  
clap and cheer

【排斥异己】pái chì yì jǐ  
exclude outsiders/ discriminate (or renounce) against  
those who hold different views

【排除万难】pái chú wàn nán  
surmount every difficulty (or obstacle)/ overcome all  
difficulties

【排难解纷】pái nàn jiě fēn  
settle (or mediate) disputes/ clear up misunderstand-  
ings/ pour oil on troubled waters

【排山倒海】pái shān dǎo hǎi  
topple the mountains and overturn the seas/ with the  
momentum of an avalanche/ with the force of a land-  
slide and the power of a tidal wave

【攀龙附凤】pān lóng fù fèng  
play up to people of power and influence/ put oneself  
under the patronage of a bigwig

【盘根错节】pán gēn cuò jié  
with twisted roots and gnarled branches — complicated  
and difficult to deal with/ as complicated as trees with  
twisting roots and intercrossing branches/ (of old so-  
cial forces) deep-rooted

【判若云泥】pàn ruò yún ní  
as far removed as heaven is from earth/ poles apart



【庞然大物】páng rán dà wù

a huge monster/formidable giant/colossus/behemoth

【旁敲侧击】páng qiāo cè jī

attack by innuendo/ make veiled attack/ make oblique references and sly injurious remarks/ make oblique thrust/ beat about the bush

【旁若无人】páng ruò wú rén

act as if no one was nearby—self-assured or supercilious/ an unwarranted assumption of airs/overweening

【旁征博引】páng zhēng bó yǐn

quote copiously from many sources/ be well-provided with supporting information

【抛头露面】pāo tóu lù miàn

(of a woman in feudal society) appear(or show one's face)in public/ (of a woman) expose oneself in public

【抛砖引玉】pāo zhuān yǐn yù

cast a brick to attract jade—offer a few commonplace remarks by way of introduction so that others may come up with valuable opinions/ cast a brick to get a gem—a modest spur to induce others to come forward with valuable contributions

【咆哮如雷】páo xiāo rú léi

be a thundering rage/ roar with rage

【赔了夫人又折兵】péi le fū rén yòu shé bīng

throw the helve after the hatchet

【喷薄欲出】pēn bó yù chū



gust forth/ spurt

【朋比为奸】péng bǐ wéi jiān

conspire for illegal ends/ associate to plot treason/ act in collusion with/ gang up/ collude

【鹏程万里】péng chéng wàn lǐ

a roc can reach a destination of a myriad miles away at one jump — (said of those who) have a bright future

【蓬头垢面】péng tóu gòu miàn

with dishevelled hair and a dirty face/ unkempt

【捧腹大笑】pěng fù dà xiào

split (shake or burst) one's sides with laughter/ be convulsed with laughter/ belly laugh

【披肝沥胆】pī gān lì dǎn

open one's liver and empty his gall bladder — speak without reserve; talk with an effusion of heart/ open up one's heart/ be open and sincere/ be loyal and faithful/ unbutton one's soul/ bare one's heart (soul or thoughts)/ speak one's mind

【披坚执锐】pī jiān zhí ruì

dressed in strong armour and armed with sharp weapons — be fully armed and ready for combat/ wear armour and carry weapons — be a warrior

【披荆斩棘】pī jīng zhǎn jī

cut a way through brambles and thorns — blaze one's way forward through all the difficulties/ hack one's way through the jungle and bushes

**【披沙拣金】**pī shā jiǎn jīn

sift sand minutely for gold/ sort out the fine gold from the sand — get essentials from a large mass of materials

**【披星戴月】**pī xīng dài yuè

under the canopy of the moon and the stars — work or travel night and day/ get up by star-light, not knock off work till the moon rises

**【被褐怀玉】**pī hè huái yù

wearing rough garments but carrying a precious gem in the bosom — not show off one's talent

**【劈头盖脸】**pī tóu gài liǎn

(scold) to one's face/ (blow) direct in the face/ right in the face

**【皮开肉绽】**pí kāi ròu zhàn

the skin is torn and the flesh gapes open — badly bruised from flogging

**【皮笑肉不笑】**pí xiào ròu bù xiào

put on a false smile/ cold smile/ skin-deep smile

**【皮之不存，毛将焉附】**pí zhī bù cún, máo jiāng yān fù

with the skin gone, what can the hair adhere to — a thing cannot exist without its basis

**【蚍蜉撼树】**pí fú hàn shù

an ant trying to topple a giant tree — ridiculously over-rating one's own strength



【疲于奔命】pí yú bēn mìng

be kept constantly on the run/ be tired out by too much running around/ tired and exhausted from rushing about on missions/ be weighed down with work

【匹夫有责】pǐ fū yǒu zé

every man has a share of responsibility for the fate of his country

【匹夫之勇】pǐ fū zhī yǒng

reckless courage/ foolhardiness

【否极泰来】pǐ jí tài lái

out of the depth of misfortune comes bliss

【偏听偏信】piān tīng piān xìn

heed and trust only one side/ listen only to one side/ be biased

【片甲不存】piàn jiǎ bù cún

not a single armoured warrior remains — the army is completely wiped out

【片瓦无存】piàn wǎ wú cún

not a single tile remains — be razed to the ground

【片言只字】piàn yán zhī zì

fragments of writing/ half a word/ just a note with few writing on it

【贫病交迫】pín bǐng jiāo pò

suffering from both poverty and sickness/ be sick and in financial straits/ be sick as well as poor

【贫无立锥之地】pín wú lì zhuī zhī dì

so poor as to have "no place to stick on awl"/ utterly destitute/in extreme poverty

【贫嘴薄舌】pín zuǐ bó shé

garrulous and sharp-tongued

【牝鸡司晨】pìn jī sī chén

a hen trying to cry cock-a-doodle-doo — wife being the head of the family (an expression used to deride a hen-pecked husband)/ the grey mare is the better horse

【平白无故】píng bái wú gù

without any reason/ for no reason/ gratuitously

【平步青云】píng bù qīng yún

spring to heaven from the level — make a sudden rise in life/ rapidly go up in the world/ have a meteoric rise

【平淡无奇】píng dàn wú qí

nothing exciting/ very ordinary/ nothing remarkable/ pedestrian

【平地风波】píng dì fēng bō

a sudden storm on a calm sea/ a sudden, unexpected turn of events/ unforeseen trouble/ a crisis out of nowhere

【平地楼台】píng dì lóu tái

high buildings rise from the ground — start from scratch

【平地一声雷】píng dì yī shēng léi

a peal of spring thunder roars over the horizon/ a sudden clap of thunder — a sudden big change



【平分秋色】píng fēn qiū sè

divide equally/ (of two parties) have equal shares (of honour, power, glory, etc.)/ go halves/ go share and share alike/ go fifty-fifty (with)

【平铺直叙】píng pū zhí xù

tell in a simple, straightforward way/ speak or write in a dull, flat style/ dull (or insipid) expressions

【平起平坐】píng qǐ píng zuò

sit as equals at the same table with/ be on an equal footing

【平心静气】píng xīn jìng qì

with equal mind/ with cool determination/ with equanimity/ even-minded/ dispassionately/ calmly

【平易近人】píng yì jìn rén

(of a person) amiable and easy of approach

【评头品足】píng tóu pǐn zú

make frivolous remarks about a woman's appearance/ comment on (or upon)/ criticize people not in a good sense/ find fault with/ be overcritical

【萍水相逢】píng shuǐ xiāng féng

(of strangers) meet by chance like patches of drifting duckweed/ casual, temporary meeting/ a strange bed-fellow/ ships that pass in the night

【泼妇骂街】pō fù mà jiē

like a shrew shouting abuse in the street

【婆婆妈妈】pó pó mā mā

womanishly fussy/ sentimental/ mawkish/ maudlin

【迫不得已】pò bù dé yǐ

be forced (driven or compelled) to/ have no alternative (or choice) but/ do sth against one's will/ no other way

【迫不及待】pò bù jí dài

cannot wait/ too impatient to wait/ unable to hold oneself back/ brook no delay/ be all agog to do sth/ posthaste

【迫在眉睫】pò zài méi jié

extremely urgent/ be imminent/ be impending

【破除迷信】pò chú mí xìn

do away with all fetishes and superstitions/ banish all blind faith/ topple old idols

【破釜沉舟】pò fǔ chén zhōu

break cooking pots and sink boats — army's grim determination of no retreat/break the cauldrons and sink the boats (after crossing) — cut off all means of retreat/burn one's boats (or bridges)/cross the Rubicon

【破镜重圆】pò jìng chóng yuán

a broken mirror joined together — reunion of a couple after an enforced separation or rupture

【破旧立新】pò jiù lì xīn

destroy the old and establish the new/ discard the old and create sth new

【破口大骂】pò kǒu dà mà

shout abuse/ abuse freely/ let loose a torrent of abuse

【破涕为笑】pò tì wéi xiào

(one's) tears melt into smiles (of face)/ smile through tears/ change tears into laughter

【破绽百出】pò zhàn bǎi chū

be full of holes (or flaws)/ be full of loopholes (or defects)

【剖腹藏珠】pōu fù cáng zhū

rip open the stomach to hide a pearl — die for the sake of gain

【扑朔迷离】pū shuò mí lí

complicated and confusing

【铺天盖地】pū tiān gài dì

blot out the sky and cover up the earth/ like a ton of or hundred bricks

【铺张浪费】pū zhāng làng fèi

extravagance and waste/ extravagant/ wasteful

【璞玉浑金】pú yù hún jīn

uncut jade and unrefined gold — unadorned beauty/ gold-ore and unworked jade — said of one who has not been spoiled

【普天同庆】pǔ tiān tóng qīng

the whole world or nation joins in the jubilation/ universal rejoicing



## Q

【七长八短】qī cháng bā duǎn

of uneven size

【七颠八倒】qī diān bā dào

in great confusion/ at sixes and sevens/ all upside down/ totter in any and all directions/ topsy-turvy

【七零八落】qī líng bā luò

in a state of confusion/ scattered here and there/ all a hideous mess

【七拼八凑】qī pīn bā còu

a patchwork without pattern or order/ scrape (piece or knock) together/ rig up

【七窍生烟】qī qiào shēng yān

fume with anger/ foam with rage

【七上八下】qī shàng bā xià

in a mental flurry of indecision/ be agitated/ be perturbed

【七手八脚】qī shǒu bā jiǎo

"seven hands and eight feet"—great hurry and bustle/ all join in, each lending a hand/ serve hand and foot/ too many cooks/ all flurry and confusion

【七嘴八舌】qī zuǐ bā shé



“with seven mouths and eight tongues” — clash of opinions/lively discussion with everybody trying to get a word in/ all talking at once

【妻离子散】qī lí zǐ sǎn

with one's family broken up/ breaking up or scattering of one's family

【凄风苦雨】qī fēng kǔ yǔ

wailing wind and weeping rain — wretched circumstances

【期期艾艾】qī qī ài ài

stammer

【欺人太甚】qī rén tài shèn

bully others too much/ go too far in insult (in injury or in bullying others)

【欺人之谈】qī rén zhī tán

deceitful words/ deceptive talk

【欺软怕硬】qī ruǎn pà yǐng

bully the weak and fear the strong

【欺世盗名】qī shì dào míng

win popularity by cheap means/ unsound scholarship/ gain the fame by deceiving the public/ angle for undeserved fame

【漆黑一团】qī hēi yī tuán

pitch-dark/altogether pitch black/as black as night (or midnight)/be completely in the dark/an utterly dark picture/as black as a crow (coal or ink)/in a fog/in a

complete(proper or terrible) mess/utterly hopeless

【齐头并进】qí tóu bìng jìn

advance side by side/ do two or more things at once

【齐心协力】qí xīn xié lì

work as one(man)/ be of one heart/ with one heart/  
make concerted efforts/ join hands (with)/ hand to  
fist/ hang together/ pull together

【其乐无穷】qí lè wú qióng

it is a great joy to/ an endless enjoyment

【其貌不扬】qí mào bù yáng

his appearance is by no means imposing

【其势汹汹】qí shì xiōng xiōng

look threatening/ bluster/ furiously

【其味无穷】qí wèi wú qióng

have a boundless good flavour/ a lasting pleasant taste

【奇耻大辱】qí chǐ dà rǔ

galling shame and humiliation/ crying shame and  
crowning humiliation/ deep disgrace

【奇货可居】qí huò kě jū

hoard as a rare commodity to corner the market/ wait-  
ing to sell sth valuable at a high price/ set a high price  
and hold back

【奇谈怪论】qí tán guài lùn

strange tale/ ridiculous argument/ fantastic stories  
and theories

【奇文共赏】qí wén gòng shǎng

a remarkable work should be shared and its subtleties discussed

【奇形怪状】qí xíng guài zhuàng

grotesque or fantastic in shape or appearance/ strange sight/ badly dressed appearance

【奇珍异宝】qí zhēn yì bǎo

very rare and valuable objects

【奇装异服】qí zhuāng yì fú

exotic costume/ bizarre dress/ outlandish clothes

【骑虎难下】qí hǔ nán xià

he who rides a tiger finds it difficult to dismount — have no way to back down/ like riding on a tiger — afraid to go on and unable to get down/ have (or hold) a wolf by the ears

【骑马找马】qí mǎ zhǎo mǎ

looking for a horse while sitting on one — hold on to one job while seeking a better one/ look for donkey on donkey back — absent-minded

【棋逢对手】qí féng duì shǒu

meet one's match in a chess tournament/ be well-matched in a contest/ find (or meet) one's match/ diamond cuts diamond/ when Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug-of-war/ even-matched

【旗鼓相当】qí gǔ xiāng dāng

equal in match or contest of strength/ be well-matched/ be a match for/ a Roland for an Oliver

【旗开得胜】qí kāi dé shèng

win victory as soon as one's banner is displayed/ win victory in the first battle/ gain a battle at the unfurling of the flag/ win speedy success/ succeed at the first try

【乞哀告怜】qǐ āi gào lián

piteously beg help

【岂有此理】qǐ yǒu cǐ lǐ

is there such a principle? / who ever heard of such a thing? / this is an arrant nonsense indeed! / how unreasonable! / by thunder! / preposterous/ outrageous/ absurd/ fantastic

【杞人忧天】qǐ rén yōu tiān

like the man of Qi who was haunted by the fear that the sky might fall — entertain imaginary or groundless fears/ superfluous worry/ unnecessary anxiety

【起承转合】qǐ chéng zhuǎn hé

introduction, elucidation of the theme, transition to another viewpoint and summing up — the four steps in the composition of an essay

【起死回生】qǐ sǐ huí shēng

(praise of doctors) make the dead come back to life/ (of a doctor) bring back to life/ snatch a patient from the jaws of death

【气贯长虹】qì guàn cháng hóng

imbued with a spirit as lofty as the rainbow spanning the sky/ full of noble aspiration and daring

【气急败坏】qì jí bài huài

flustered and exasperated/ utterly discomfited

【气势磅礴】qì shì páng bó

of a great momentum/ powerful

【气势汹汹】qì shì xiōng xiōng

be in a very threatening manner/ an aggressive posture/ fierce/ truculent/ overbearing/ arrogantly

【气吞山河】qì tūn shān hé

imbued with a spirit that can conquer mountains and rivers/ full of daring

【气味相投】qì wèi xiāng tóu

people of the same tastes/ be of the same cast of mind/ be-like-minded/ be birds of a feather/ be two of a kind/ be congenial to each other

【气息奄奄】qì xī yǎn yǎn

at the end of one's resources/ at one's last gasp/ like a person who is sinking/ at the point of death/ at death's door/ moribund/ dying

【气象万千】qì xiàng wàn qiān

a magnificent and changeful prospect/ spectacular/ majestic

【气焰嚣张】qì yàn xiāo zhāng

be swollen with arrogance

【气壮山河】qì zhuàng shān hé

full of power and grandeur/ sublime and heroic/ magnificent

【弃暗投明】qì àn tóu míng

forsake darkness and cross over to brightness/ leave

the darkness and come to the light/ leave the reactionary side and cross over to the side of progress

【弃甲曳兵】qì jiǎ yè bīng

(of troops) throw away one's armour and trail the weapons behind/ drag weapons and abandon armour in a rout/ be routed/ flee pell-mell

【弃旧图新】qì jiù tú xīn

reject the old for the new/ start afresh/ turn over a new leaf

【弃如粪土】qì rú fèn tǔ

cast away like dirt

【弃之如敝屣】qì zhī rú bì xī

cast aside like an old shoe/ be left in the basket

【泣不成声】qì bù chéng shēng

choke with sobs

【恰到好处】qià dào hǎo chù

just right/ to a nicety

【恰如其分】qià rú qí fèn

to a proper extent/ in appropriate measure/ in just quantity/ neither more nor less than/ well-measured/ apt/ appropriate

【千变万化】qiān biàn wàn huà

ever-changing/ innumerable (incalculable or kaleidoscope) changes

【千差万别】qiān chā wàn bié

differ in thousands of ways

**【千锤百炼】** qiān chuí bǎi liàn

thoroughly tempered (or steeled)/ well-experienced/  
have gone through fire and water/ (of literary works)  
be polished again and again/ be revised and rewritten  
many times

**【千方百计】** qiān fāng bǎi jì

in a thousand and one ways/ in every possible way/ by  
every possible means/ use every means to/ do all in  
one's power/ resort to every trick/ use every  
stratagem/ leave no stone unturned/ leave no means  
untried/ by fair means or foul/ by hook or (by) crook

**【千夫所指】** qiān fū suǒ zhǐ

be up for general castigation with a thousand accusing  
fingers levelled against one/ face a thousand accusing  
fingers/ be universally condemned

**【千古奇谈】** qiān gǔ qí tán

strange stories of the ages/ a forever strange tale

**【千军万马】** qiān jūn wàn mǎ

thousands upon thousands of horses and soldiers — a  
powerful army/ a world of people

**【千钧重负】** qiān jūn zhòng fù

a crushing burden/ a vital responsibility

**【千里送鹅毛，礼轻情意重】** qiān lǐ sòng é máo, lǐ qīng qíng yì zhòng

to send the feather of a goose one thousand *li*, the gift  
in itself may be insignificant, but the good-will is



deep/ the gift itself may be light as a goose feather;  
but sent from afar, it conveys deep feeling/ the present  
is trifling but the feeling is profound

【千里迢迢】qiān lǐ tiáo tiáo

thousands of *li* away/ from afar/ over a great dis-  
tance/ far, faraway

【千里之堤，溃于蚁穴】qiān lǐ zhī dī, kuī yú yǐ xué

one ant hole may cause the collapse of a thousand-*li*  
dyke — slight negligence may lead to a great disaster/ a  
small ant's hole may destroy a great dam/ a small leak  
will sink a great ship

【千里之行，始于足下】qiān lǐ zhī xíng, shǐ yú zú xià

a thousand-*li* journey starts with the first step/ a  
thousand-*li* journey is started by taking the first step

【千虑一得】qiān lǜ yī dé

even a fool occasionally hits on a good idea/ a fool's  
bolt may sometimes hits the mark/ a fool may give a  
wise man counsel

【千难万险】qiān nán wàn xiǎn

numerous dangers and hazards

【千篇一律】qiān piān yī lǜ

following the same pattern/ all in the same key/ cast  
in the same mould/ stereotyped/ invariably/  
monotony



【千奇百怪】qiān qí bǎi guài

all sorts(or kinds) of strange things/ an infinite variety of fantastic phenomena/ many unusual things/ exceedingly strange/ very wonderful

【千秋万代】qiān qiū wàn dài

generation after generation/ in all the generations to come/ throughout the ages/ forever

【千山万水】qiān shān wàn shuǐ

ten thousand crags and torrents/ numerous mountains and rivers/ a long and arduous journey/ a great distance/ land and sea

【千丝万缕】qiān sī wàn lǚ

a thousand and one links/ countless ties/ innumerable links/ be linked in a hundred and one ways/ have everything complicated to do with each other

【千头万绪】qiān tóu wàn xù

thousands of strands and loose ends/ (of things) extremely complicated and difficult to unravel/ a multitude of things

【千辛万苦】qiān xīn wàn kǔ

innumerable trials and tribulations/ untold hardships/ severe toil

【千言万语】qiān yán wàn yǔ

thousands and thousands of words/ numerous words

【千载难逢】qiān zǎi nán féng

an opportunity of a thousand years/ once in a blue

moon/ the chance of a lifetime

【千载一时】qiān zǎi yī shí

occur only once in a thousand years—very rare/ an extremely rare chance/ golden opportunity

【千真万确】qiān zhēn wàn què

true as gospel/ absolutely true/ as sure as a gun/ as sure as eggs is eggs/ really and truly

【牵肠挂肚】qiān cháng guà dù

feel deep anxiety about/ be deeply concerned/ be very worried about/ infinite longing for/ cause deep personal concern

【牵一发而动全身】qiān yī fà ér dòng quán shēn

pull one hair and the whole body is affected—a slight move in one part may affect the situation as a whole/ one careless move loses the whole game

【谦谦君子】qiān qiān jūn zǐ

a modest, self-disciplined gentleman/ a hypocritically modest person

【谦虚谨慎】qiān xū jǐn shèn

modest and prudent

【前车之覆,后车之鉴】qián chē zhī fù, hòu chē zhī jiàn

the overturned cart ahead is a warning to the carts behind/ one should take warning from another's mistake/ heed previous examples

【前车之鉴】qián chē zhī jiàn



warning taken from the overturned cart in front/  
lessons drawn from others' mistakes (or failures)

【前赴后继】qián fù hòu jì

advance wave upon wave

【前功尽弃】qián gōng jìn qī

all that has been achieved is spoiled/ nullified all the  
advantages of a series of victories/ all one's previous  
efforts are wasted/ all labour lost/ all previous work  
undone

【前呼后拥】qián hū hòu yōng

with many attendants crowding round

【前倨后恭】qián jù hòu gōng

be first supercilious and then deferential/ change from  
arrogance to humility

【前门拒虎, 后门进狼】qián mén jù hǔ, hòu mén jìn láng

drive the tiger away from the front door and let a wolf  
in at the back — fend off one danger only to fall prey to  
another

【前怕狼, 后怕虎】qián pà láng, hòu pà hǔ

fear the wolves ahead and the tigers behind — full of  
fears/ be plagued by all sorts of fears

【前仆后继】qián pū hòu jì

no sooner has one fallen than others step into the  
breach/ one steps into the breach as another falls/ as  
those in front fall, those behind take up their posi-  
tions/ with fresh forces always stepping forward as

others fell

【前前后后】qián qián hòu hòu

the ins and outs (of a matter)/ the whole story/ the entire process

【前人栽树, 后人乘凉】qián rén zāi shù, hòu rén chéng liáng

one generation plants the trees under whose cool shade another generation rests — profiting by the labour of one's forefathers/ one sows and another reaps

【前思后想】qián sī hòu xiǎng

turn over in one's mind/ think over again and again

【前事不忘, 后事之师】qián shì bù wàng, hòu shì zhī shī

past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide for the future/ learn from the past experiences/ today is yesterday's pupil

【前所未闻】qián suǒ wèi wén

never heard of before/ unheard-of

【前所未有】qián suǒ wèi yǒu

such as never previously existed/ hitherto unknown/ beyond (or without) example/ unprecedented

【前途无量】qián tú wú liàng

have boundless prospects/ have a very promising future

【前无古人】qián wú gǔ rén

without parallel in history/ unprecedented



【前因后果】qián yīn hòu guǒ

cause(s) and effect(s)/ the entire process

【钱可通神】qián kě tōng shén

"money can move the gods" — money makes the mare go

【潜移默化】qián yí mò huà

exert a subtle influence on sb's character, thinking, etc. / be unconsciously influenced/ a silent transforming(or imperceptible)influence

【黔驴技穷】qián lú jì qióng

the proverbial donkey in ancient Guizhou has exhausted its tricks — can do nothing more/ at one's wits' end

【浅尝辄止】qiǎn cháng zhé zhǐ

stop after getting a little knowledge of a subject or about sth/ be satisfied with a smattering of a subject

【枪林弹雨】qiāng lín dàn yǔ

a hail (or rain) of bullets

【强奸民意】qiáng jiān mín yì

defile public opinion

【强将手下无弱兵】qiáng jiàng shǒu xià wú ruò bīng

there are no poor soldiers under a good general/ a capable commander leads an army of good soldiers

【强弩之末】qiáng nǔ zhī mò

the arrow from a strong bow becomes weak after flying its distance/ an arrow at the end of its flight — a

spent force/ the furthest reach of a shot from a strong bow/ on the decline no longer what it was

【强中自有强中手】qiáng zhōng zì yǒu qiáng zhōng shǒu

however strong you are, there's always someone stronger

【墙倒众人推】qiáng dǎo zhòng rén tuī

when a wall is about to collapse, everybody gives it a push — everybody hits a man who is down/ when a wall is falling, all push it — take advantage of other's frustration

【强词夺理】qiǎng cí duó lǐ

use lame arguments and perverted logic/ distort the right and talk speciously/ resort to sophistry in self-justification/ twist one's principles in order to finish an argument/ reason fallaciously/ chop logic/ sophisticate/ captious

【强人所难】qiǎng rén suǒ nán

try to make sb do sth which he won't or can't/ constrain sb to do things that are beyond his power

【敲骨吸髓】qiāo gǔ xī suǐ

break the bones and suck the marrow — cruel, blood-sucking exploitation/ suck the life-blood

【敲诈勒索】qiāo zhà lè suǒ

blackmail and impose exactions on (or upon)/ extort and racketeer

【乔装改扮】qiáo zhuāng gǎi bàn

disguise oneself

【巧夺天工】qiǎo duó tiān gōng

wonderful workmanship (or superb craftsmanship) /  
excelling nature / surpass natural creation

【巧妇难为无米之炊】qiǎo fù nán wéi wú mǐ zhī chuī

even the cleverest housewife cannot cook a meal without rice — one can't make bricks without straw / one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear / you can't make something out of nothing / if you have no hand you can't make a fist

【巧立名目】qiǎo lì míng mù

concoct various pretexts / invent all sorts of names

【巧取豪夺】qiǎo qǔ háo duó

secure by force or by trick

【巧舌如簧】qiǎo shé rú huáng

have a silver (smooth, oily, glib or ready) tongue / hon-  
eymouthed

【巧言令色】qiǎo yán lìng sè

pleasing words and smoothness of manner / fine words  
and an insinuating countenance

【切磋琢磨】qiē cuō zhuó mó

study and learn by mutual discussion / learn from each  
other by exchanging views / lucubration and consulta-  
tion / compare notes



【切齿痛恨】qiè chǐ tòng hèn

grind (or gnash) one's teeth in hatred

【切肤之痛】qiè fū zhī tòng

keenly felt pain/ deep grief

【窃窃私议】qiè qiè sī yì

exchange whispered comments/ confidential discussion

【窃窃私语】qiè qiè sī yǔ

intimate or confidential talk/ have a tête-à-tête talk/  
whisper/ murmur

【锲而不舍】qiè ěr bù shě

keep on carving unflaggingly — work with perseverance

【亲密无间】qīn mī wú jiàn

be on very intimate terms/ (as) thick as thieves/ in  
close co-ordination

【亲痛仇快】qīn tòng chóu kuài

sadden one's friends and gladden one's enemies/  
grieve those dear and near to us and gladden the ene-  
my

【钦差大臣】qīn chāi dà chén

an imperial envoy/ an imperial commissioner

【擒贼先擒王】qín zéi xiān qín wáng

to catch bandits, first catch the ringleader — pay heed  
to what is important

【沁人心脾】qìn rén xīn pí

gladdening the heart and refreshing the mind/ mental-  
ly refreshing/ refreshing

【青出于蓝，而胜于蓝】qīng chū yú lán, ér shèng yú lán

indigo blue is extracted from the indigo plant but is bluer than it — the pupil learns from and outdoes his teacher

【青黄不接】qīng huáng bù jiē

when the new crop is still in the blade and the old one is all consumed — temporary shortage/ when one crop is eaten and the next still green — the transition from one period to another/ gap in succession/ in temporary financial difficulty

【青面獠牙】qīng miàn liáo yá

(of a monster) with a green face and ferocious fangs — terrifying in appearance

【青云直上】qīng yún zhí shàng

rapid advancement in one's career/ meteoric rise

【轻而易举】qīng ér yì jǔ

easy to undertake (or do)/ (as) easy as ABC/ an easy job/ without making an effort/ can be easily accomplished/ without striking a blow

【轻歌曼舞】qīng gē màn wǔ

sing merrily and dance gracefully/ soft songs and beautiful dances

【轻举妄动】qīng jǔ wàng dòng

act rashly/ take reckless actions/ do sth without careful thought/ take a leap in the dark/ go off the deep end/ impetuosity

**【轻描淡写】** qīng miáo dàn xiě

touch on the matter lightly/ describe with a delicate touch/ mention casually/ play down/ mild comments

**【轻诺寡信】** qīng nuò guǎ xìn

who promises too lightly is seldom able to live up to his words/ make promises easily but seldom keep them

**【轻手轻脚】** qīng shǒu qīng jiǎo

(move) cautiously without any noise/ gently/ softly/ gingerly

**【轻于鸿毛】** qīng yú hóng máo

lighter than a (goose) feather — a death which is of no significance at all

**【轻重倒置】** qīng zhòng dào zhì

put the trivial above the important/ reverse the order of importance/ lack (or lack of) a sense of proportion

**【轻装上阵】** qīng zhuāng shàng zhèn

go into battle with a light pack/ come to the battle-front without any mental burdens/ go forward with one's burdens discarded

**【倾巢出动】** qīng cháo chū dòng

(of enemy or bandits) turn out in full force/ encroach upon (territory) in full strength

**【倾城倾国】** qīng chéng qīng guó

(of a woman) lovely enough to cause the fall of a city or a state/ exceedingly beautiful

【倾家荡产】qīng jiā dòng chǎn

lose a family fortune/ bring the family to ruin/ reduced to poverty and ruin

【倾盆大雨】qīng pén dà yǔ

pouring (or torrential) rain/ heavy downpour/ cloudburst/ rain cats and dogs

【倾箱倒篋】qīng xiāng dào qiè

turn out all one's boxes and suitcases

【清规戒律】qīng guī jiè lǜ

taboos and commandments/ restrictions and fetters/ outmoded rules and regulations and conventions

【清夜扣心】qīng yè mén xīn

examine one's own conscience in the stillness (or silence) of the night

【蜻蜓点水】qīng tíng diǎn shuǐ

like a dragonfly skimming the surface of the water — touch on sth without going into it deeply

【情不自禁】qíng bù zì jīn

unable to restrain the emotions/ be seized with a sudden impulse/ overcome by one's feelings/ cannot refrain from/ cannot help (doing sth)/ in the grip of passion

【情急智生】qíng jí zhī shēng

hit on a good idea in a moment of desperation/ have quick wits in emergency

【情随事迁】qíng suí shì qiān

the alteration of things makes men's feeling change/  
people's feelings change with the circumstances/ cir-  
cumstances alter cases

【情同手足】qíng tóng shǒu zú

close like brothers/ with brotherly love for each other

【情投意合】qíng tóu yì hé

mutual affection and agreement/ in love with each oth-  
er/ suited to each other perfectly/ find each other con-  
genial/ hit it off perfectly/ hand in glove with

【情有可原】qíng yǒu kě yuán

excusable/ pardonable

【晴天霹雳】qíng tiān pī lì

(like) a bolt from the blue/ (like) a bolt out of the  
clear sky/ thunderbolt

【请君入瓮】qǐng jūn rù wèng

"kindly step into the vat" — try what you have devised  
against others

【庆父不死，鲁难未已】qíng fù bù sǐ, lǔ nán wèi yǐ

until Qing Fu is done away with, the crisis in the state  
of Lu will not be over — there will always be trouble  
until he who stirs it up is removed

【罄竹难书】qíng zhú nán shū

(of crimes, etc.) inexpressible and too numerous to be  
listed in one book/ (of a man's sins) too numerous to  
record

【穷兵黷武】qióng bīng dú wǔ

exhausting military resources and indulging in wanton  
war

exhaust all resources to build up military power/ use all one's armed might to indulge in wars of aggression/ wantonly engage in military aggression/ engage in unjust military ventures/ wage sanguinary wars/ adopt a warlike policy/ be militaristic

【穷极无聊】qióng jí wú liáo

be utterly bored/ absolutely senseless/ extreme boredom/ disgusting

【穷年累月】qióng nián lěi yuè

for years on end/ year after year

【穷山恶水】qióng shān è shuǐ

barren mountains and unruly rivers

【穷奢极欲】qióng shē jí yù

(indulge in) luxury and extravagance/ live on the fat of the land/ (live a life of) wanton extravagance/ be lapped in luxury

【穷途末路】qióng tú mò lù

(go into the) cul-de-sac (or blind alley)/ (driven into) an impasse/ dead end

【穷乡僻壤】qióng xiāng pì rǎng

a remote, backward place/ an obscure region/ the remote hinterland/ a district shut off from the outside world/ back lands

【穷凶极恶】qióng xiōng jí è

in a vicious and unrestrained way/ extremely violent and wicked/ wickedness and evil carried to the utmost possible degree/ savage and sinister in the extreme/

utterly evil/ diabolical/ devilish

【穷原竟委】qióng yuán jìng wěi

make a thorough investigation of the antecedents and consequences/ try to find out the chain of cause and effect/ get to the bottom of the matter/ make a thorough inquiring into sth

【穷则思变】qióng zé sī biàn

poverty gives rise to a desire for change

【茕茕孑立, 形影相吊】qióng qióng jié lì, xíng yǐng xiāng diào

standing all alone, body and shadow comforting each other

【琼楼玉宇】qióng lóu yù yǔ

a richly decorated jade palace—a magnificent building

【秋风过耳】qiū fēng guò ěr

like an autumn breeze passing the ear—thinking sth of no importance, regard with indifference

【秋风扫落叶】qiū fēng sǎo luò yè

(like) the autumn wind sweeping away the fallen (or dead) leaves—wipe out the corrupt and evil in an easy way

【秋毫无犯】qiū háo wú fàn

(of highly disciplined troops) not commit the slightest offence against the civilians/ not encroach on the interests of the people to the slightest degree/ forbid the slightest violation of the people's interests/ do not

cause the slightest damage to the people

【秋后算帐】qiū hòu suàn zhàng

square accounts after the autumn harvest — wait until after a political movement is over to settle accounts with the leadership or the masses

【囚首垢面】qiú shǒu gòu miàn

with unkempt hair and dirty face

【求大同,存小异】qiú dà tóng, cún xiǎo yì

seek common ground on major issues while reserving differences on minor points/ seek common ground on major issues while leaving aside the minor differences

【求全责备】qiú quán zé bèi

demand perfection/ take to task severely, expect (people) to be saints

【求同存异】qiú tóng cún yì

seek common ground while reserving differences

【求之不得】qiú zhī bù dé

all that one could wish for/ most welcome

【曲尽其妙】qū jìn qí miào

express the subtlety tactfully and finely

【曲突徙薪】qū tū xǐ xīn

bend the chimney and remove the fuel (to prevent a possible fire) — take precautions against a possible damage

【曲意逢迎】qū yì féng yíng

use every means to fawn on (or upon) sb/ flatter sb in



a hundred and one ways/ go out of one's way to curry favour

【屈打成招】qū dǎ chéng zhāo

extort confessions by torture/ obtain confession under torture/ confess to false charges under torture

【屈指可数】qū zhǐ kě shǔ

can be counted on one's fingers — very few

【趋炎附势】qū yán fù shì

hurry to the glorious and hang on to the influential/ be follower of the rich and powerful/ play up to those in power/ curry favour with the powerful/ time-serving

【趋之若鹜】qū zhī ruò wū

go after sth like a flock of ducks/ scramble for sth

【曲高和寡】qū gāo hè guǎ

songs of a high-brow type will find very few people to join in the chorus/ highbrow songs find few singers/ too highbrow to be popular/ caviare to the general

【取长补短】qǔ cháng bǔ duǎn

learn from each other's strong points to offset one's weaknesses/ overcome one's own shortcomings by learning from others' strong points/ make up one's deficiencies by acquiring others' strong points/ mutually make up one's deficiencies

【取而代之】qǔ ér dài zhī

take someone's place/ step into sb's shoes/ fill sb's bonnet/ replace sb/ supersede sb

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【取之不尽，用之不竭】qǔ zhī bù jìn, yòng zhī bù jié

inexhaustible/ abundant

【去粗取精】qù cū qǔ jīng

discard the dross and select the essential

【去伪存真】qù wěi cún zhēn

eliminate the false and retain the true/ winnow truth from falsehood

【权衡轻重】quán héng qīng zhòng

weigh one thing against another/ weigh the matter carefully

【权宜之计】quán yí zhī jì

a measure of expediency/ temporary expedient/ a makeshift (device)/ stopgap measures

【全军覆没】quán jūn fù mò

total destruction of an army/ (an army) be completely wiped out

【全力以赴】quán lì yǐ fù

devote every effort to/ do all in one's power/ strive with all one's might for/ spare no efforts (or pains)/ go all out/ do one's utmost/ with might and main/ strain every nerve/ do one's level best/ put one's back (heart, whole heart and soul or life) into sth/ tooth and nail

【全神贯注】quán shén guān zhù

concentrate the whole energy upon/ with all one's mental faculties on the stretch/ set one's heart (or

mind) on (upon or to) sth/ be absorbed (or engrossed) in/ be utterly concentrated in (or on)/ be preoccupied with/ be all eyes (or ears)/ with breathless attention/ with absorbed interest/ with all one's soul

【全心全意】quán xīn quán yì

with one's heart and soul/ with all one's heart/ complete devotion/ whole-heartedly

【拳打脚踢】quán dǎ jiǎo tī

cuff and kick/ beat up

【犬马之劳】quǎn mǎ zhī láo

serve like a dog or a horse/ be at one's beck and call

【犬牙交错】quǎn yá jiāo cuò

be very close to and inter-locked with/ of jigsaw pattern/ jigsaw-like

【却之不恭】què zhī bù gōng

it would be impolite to decline

【确凿不移】què zuò bù yí

definite and sure/ be proved to the hilt/ conclusive/ authentic/ irrefutable

【鹁巢鸠占】què cháo jiū zhàn

the turtledove occupies the magpie's nest—one person seizes another's place, land, etc.

【群策群力】qún cè qún lì

pool the wisdom and efforts of everyone/ club ideas and exertions/ collective wisdom and efforts/ united

strength and wisdom

【群龙无首】qún lóng wú shǒu

a host of dragons without a head — a group without a leader

【群魔乱舞】qún mó luàn wǔ

a host of demons dancing in riotous revelry — rogues of all kinds running wild

【群起而攻之】qún qǐ ér gōng zhī

all rise and attack/ rally together to attack/ all rise up in struggle against/ launch collective attacks on

【群威群胆】qún wēi qún dǎn

mass heroism and daring

## R

【燃眉之急】rán méi zhī jí

“with eyebrows on fire” — urgently critical/ as pressing as a fire singeing one's eyebrows — a matter of extreme urgency/ a pressing need/ imminence/ emergent

【饶有风趣】ráo yǒu fēng qù

full of wit and humour/ humorous

【惹火烧身】rě huǒ shāo shēn

stir up a fire only to burn oneself — court disaster/ ask for trouble

【惹是生非】*rě shì shēng fēi*

provoke a dispute/ provoke mischief/ stir up trouble/  
wake a sleeping dog/ be meddlesome

【热火朝天】*rè huǒ cháo tiān*

buzzing (or bustling) with activity/ stirring and  
seething/ burning with ardour/ in full swing/ flaming

【热气腾腾】*rè qì téng téng*

steaming hot/ seething with activity

【人不可貌相】*rén bù kě mào xiàng*

don't judge anyone just by appearances/ a man can not  
be known by his looks/ beauty is but skin-deep

【人不为己，天诛地灭】*rén bù wèi jǐ, tiān zhū dì miè*

unless a man looks out for himself, Heaven and Earth  
will destroy him/ everyone for himself and let the devil  
take the hindmost

【人不知，鬼不觉】*rén bù zhī, guǐ bù jué*

"not known by men or perceived by ghosts" — do in  
complete secrecy

【人才辈出】*rén cái bèi chū*

people of talent coming forth in large numbers/ men of  
talents come out in succession

【人才济济】*rén cái jǐ jǐ*

a galaxy of talent

【人地生疏】*rén dì shēng shū*

be unfamiliar with the place and the people/ be a com-

plete stranger

【人定胜天】rén dìng shèng tiān

man can conquer nature/ man will triumph over nature/ human will can overpower natural forces/ man's determination will conquer nature/ human determination will overcome destiny/ it is man's will, not heaven, that decides

【人多嘴杂】rén duō zuǐ zá

a babel of voices/ divided counsel/ too many cooks spoil the soup

【人而无信，不知其可】rén ér wú xìn, bù zhī qí kě

if a man does not keep his word, what is he good for?

【人浮于事】rén fú yú shì

too many staffs with little to do/ have more hands than needed/ superfluous staff

【人欢马叫】rén huān mǎ jiào

people bustling and horses neighing — a busy, prosperous country scene

【人间地狱】rén jiān dì yǔ

a hell on earth

【人杰地灵】rén jié dì líng

a place propitious for giving birth to great men

【人尽其才】rén jìn qí cái

bring everyone's ability (or talent) into full play

## 【人困马乏】rén kùn mǎ fá

the men weary, and their steeds spent — the entire force was exhausted/ tired and exhausted

## 【人面兽心】rén miàn shòu xīn

have a man's face but the heart of a beast — a beast in human shape/ a brute in man's shape/ a brute under a human mask

## 【人命危浅】rén mìng wēi qiǎn

one's days (or hours) are numbered

## 【人莫予毒】rén mò yú dú

"no one dare harm me" — an arrogant boast

## 【人怕出名猪怕壮】rén pà chū míng zhū pà zhuàng

fame portends trouble for men just as fattening does for pigs

## 【人弃我取】rén qì wǒ qǔ

I will take whatever others don't want

## 【人琴俱亡】rén qín jù wáng

the man and his lute are both dead — mourn (or grieve) over the dead at sight of his things left

## 【人情世故】rén qíng shì gù

the ways of the world/ worldly wisdom

## 【人山人海】rén shān rén hǎi

huge crowds of people/ a sea of human beings/ a wheatfield of people

## 【人声鼎沸】rén shēng dǐng fèi

noise and shouts in great commotion/ a hubbub of

voices/ cat's (or Dutch) concert/ a boiler factory (or works)

【人寿年丰】rén shòu nián fēng

times of peace and prosperity/ people lead a happy and peaceful life

【人同此心，心同此理】rén tóng cǐ xīn, xīn tóng cǐ lǐ

everybody feels the same about this

【人为刀俎，我为鱼肉】rén wéi dāo zǔ, wǒ wéi yú ròu

be meat on sb's chopping block—be at sb's mercy

【人微言轻】rén wēi yán qīng

the words of the lowly carry little (or no) weight

【人无廉耻，百事可为】rén wú lián chǐ, bǎi shì kě wéi

if a man is dead to shame, he can do all sorts of evils

【人无远虑，必有近忧】rén wú yuǎn lǜ, bì yǒu jìn yōu

if a man is not far-sighted he is bound to encounter difficulties in the near future

【人心所向】rén xīn suǒ xiàng

the direction of popular sentiment (or feeling)/ accord with the people's will/ in terms of popular support/ the avowed feelings of the people

【人心向背】rén xīn xiàng bèi



the people are for or against/ who enjoys popular support/with whom popular sympathy lies/ the will of the people

【人言可畏】rén yán kě wèi

gossip is a fearful thing

【人仰马翻】rén yǎng mǎ fān

men and horses all overturned — an utter defeat/ men and horses thrown off their feet — utterly routed

【人一己百】rén yī jǐ bǎi

if others succeed by making one ounce of effort, I will make a hundred times as much effort

【人云亦云】rén yún yì yún

say what everybody says/ repeat word for word what others say/ echo the views of others/ parrot

【人之常情】rén zhī cháng qíng

the way of the world/ what is natural and normal (in human relationships)/ a constant occurrence in human relationship

【仁者见仁,智者见智】rén zhě jiàn rén, zhì zhě jiàn zhì

the benevolent see benevolence and the wise see wisdom — different people have different views

【仁至义尽】rén zhì yì jìn

do everything called for by humanity and duty/ have done everything which one may be called upon to do/ do what is humanly possible to help/ exercise great re-

straint and do one's very best/ show extreme forbearance/show the utmost tolerance and patience (towards)/ the extreme patience and magnanimity/ utmost sincerity

【忍俊不禁】rěn jùn bù jīn

cannot swallow a laugh/ cannot help smiling/ simmer with laughter

【忍气吞声】rěn qì tūn shēng

restrain one's anger and keep silence/ swallow the humiliation and insult/ swallow one's pride and endure in silence/ swallow the insults in meek submission/ suffer indignities without a protest/ pocket one's pride/ submit to humiliation/ eat dirt

【忍辱负重】rěn rǔ fù zhòng

swallow humiliation and bear a heavy load/ endure humiliation in order to carry out an important mission/ discharge one's duties conscientiously in spite of slanders

【忍无可忍】rěn wú kě rěn

reach (or be at) the end of one's forbearance/ come to the end of one's patience/ be driven beyond the limits of forbearance (or endurance)/ tax one's patience to the limit/ exhaust sb's patience/ not to be endured any longer/ beyond (or past) endurance (or all bearing)/ no longer bearable

【认贼作父】rèn zéi zuò fù

take the foe for one's father/ regard the enemy as kith

and kin/ treat a thief as one's father/take a filial attitude towards the enemy of the people

【任劳任怨】rèn láo rèn yuàn

work hard without complaint/ work hard and not be upset by criticism/ willingly bear the burden of office/ bear responsibility and blame

【任凭风浪起，稳坐钓鱼船】rèn píng fēng làng qǐ, wěn zuò diào yú chuán

sit tight in the fishing boat despite the rising wind and waves — hold one's ground despite pressure or opposition

【任其自流】rèn qí zì liú

let things run their course

【任人摆布】rèn rén bǎi bù

allow oneself to be ordered about/ be at the mercy of others/ under sb's thumb

【任人唯亲】rèn rén wéi qīn

appoint people by favouritism/ cronyism

【任人唯贤】rèn rén wéi xián

appoint people on their merit/ appoint people according to their moral character and ability

【任重道远】rèn zhòng dào yuǎn

the burden is heavy and road is long — shoulder heavy responsibility/ carry heavy responsibilities through thick and thin

【日薄西山】rì bó xī shān

“the sun is setting beyond (or behind) the western hills” — declining rapidly; nearing one’s end/ decline like the setting sun/ in the evening of life/ in one’s later days/ (like) the falling sun

【日不暇给】rì bù xiá jǐ

fully occupied from morning to night/ fully engaged every day

【日积月累】rì jī yuè lěi

accumulate day by day and month by month (or over a long period)/ by slow but steady accumulation/ days and months multiplying

【日就月将】rì jiù yuè jiāng

days and months advancing — gradual progress/ daily progress and monthly advance

【日理万机】rì lǐ wàn jī

attend to numerous affairs of state every day/ be occupied with a myriad of state affairs/ busy with a myriad affairs every day

【日暮途穷】rì mù tú qióng

the day is waning and the road is ending — approaching the end of one’s days/ be at the end of one’s rope/ reach(at) the end of one’s tether/ in one’s decline/ on one’s last legs/ head for doom

【日上三竿】rì shàng sān gān

the sun is as high as three poles — the day is advancing, about 8 or 9 a. m. / the sun is tree poles high — it’s

late in the morning (referring to getting up late)

【日升月恒】rì shēng yuè héng

as the rising sun and the waxing moon — daily increasing in prosperity

【日新月异】rì xīn yuè yì

change rapidly/ change with each passing day/ bring about new changes day after day/ never-ending changes and improvements

【日月经天，江河行地】rì yuè jīng tiān, jiāng hé xíng dì

as the sun and moon in the heavens, and the rivers flow across the land — eternally unchangeable/ the ceaseless movement of the sun and moon in the skies, as immutable as the rivers on the earth

【日月如梭】rì yuè rú suō

the sun and the moon move back and forth like a shuttle — time flies

【荣华富贵】róng huá fù guì

glory, splendor, wealth and rank/ honor and wealth/ high position and great wealth

【容光焕发】róng guāng huàn fā

glowing (or brimming) with health/ with radiating health/ radiant beauty/ in fine (or pretty good) fettle/ energetic-looking/freshly

【融会贯通】róng huì guān tōng

achieve mastery through a comprehensive study of the

subject/ be well versed in/ bring together and understand thoroughly

【冗词赘句】rǒng cí zhuì jù

superfluous words/ redundant words/ (of writings) verbose wording

【如出一辙】rú chū yī zhé

be exactly the same as/ be no different from/follow the same pattern (or track)/ as if made in the same mold/ be cut from the same cloth/ run in the same groove

【如此而已】rú cǐ ér yǐ

that's what it all adds up to

【如堕五里雾中】rú duò wǔ lǐ wù zhōng

as if lost in a thick fog/ utterly mystified

【如堕烟海】rú duò yān hǎi

as if lost on a misty sea/ completely at a loss/ all at sea

【如法炮制】rú fǎ pào zhì

prepare herbal medicine by the prescribed method — follow a set pattern/ follow suit/ do according to instructions/ be modelled on

【如鲠在喉】rú gěng zài hóu

like a fishbone getting stuck in the throat — give vent to one's pent-up feelings

【如虎添翼】rú hǔ tiān yì

like a tiger that has grown wings — with might redou-

bled

【如火如荼】*rú huǒ rú tú*

flaring like fire set to dry tinder/ like a raging fire/  
growing vigorously/ blazing and powerful/ fiery

【如获至宝】*rú huò zhì bǎo*

as if one had found a treasure/ rejoice over a  
windfall/ jump at sth as godsend/ seem to have hit the  
jackpot

【如饥似渴】*rú jī sì kě*

as if thirsting or hungering for sth/with great eager-  
ness/ eagerly

【如箭在弦】*rú jiàn zài xián*

like the arrow on the bow—poised to strike

【如胶似漆】*rú jiāo sì qī*

stick to each other like glue or lacquer/ remain glued  
to each other/ be deeply attached to each other

【如狼牧羊】*rú láng mù yáng*

like a wolf shepherding sheep—(of magistrates) rule  
the people oppressively

【如狼似虎】*rú láng sì hǔ*

as ferocious as wolves and tigers/ like cruel beasts of  
prey

【如雷贯耳】*rú léi guàn ěr*

reverberate like a thunder/ piercing one's ear like  
thunder/ have resounded in one's ears (like thunder)

【如临大敌】*rú lín dà dí*

as if facing a formidable enemy/ as if confronted by a formidable enemy/ tense as a cat humping its back

【如履薄冰】*rú lǚ bó bīng*

as if walking on thin ice/ treading on (or upon) eggs/ walking on (or upon) egg-shells

【如梦初醒】*rú mèng chū xǐng*

as if awakening from a dream — come to realize (truth, error, etc.)

【如鸟兽散】*rú niǎo shòu sǎn*

flee helter-skelter/ be utterly routed

【如牛负重】*rú niú fù zhòng*

like an ox carrying a heavy load

【如入无人之境】*rú rù wú rén zhī jìng*

like entering an unpeopled land — breaking all resistance

【如丧考妣】*rú sàng kǎo bǐ*

wearing a funeral face as if newly bereft of both parents/ look as if one had lost one's parents — look utterly wretched/ be pathetically anxious

【如释重负】*rú shì zhòng fù*

as if relieved of (or from) a heavy burden (or load)/ as if a big load has been taken off one's mind/ heave a sigh of relief

【如数家珍】*rú shǔ jiā zhēn*

as if enumerating one's family treasures — very familiar with one's subject/ like telling off one's family treasures — can speak on a subject with great familiarity



**【如汤沃雪】** rú tāng wò xuě

like melting snow by pouring hot water on it — easily done

**【如蚁附膻】** rú yǐ fù shān

like ants seeking sth rank-smelling — a swarm of people running after unwholesome things or leaning on influential people for support

**【如意算盘】** rú yì suàn pán

wishful thinking/ the smug overall calculations/wishful (or smug) calculation

**【如影随形】** rú yǐng suí xíng

like the shadow following the person — very closely associated with each other/follow sb like (or as) a shadow/be a true reflection of what is

**【如鱼得水】** rú yú dé shuǐ

like fish let into the water — happy in each other's company or in one's natural element/like a fish in water/ (of persons) get along with one another swimmingly

**【如愿以偿】** rú yuàn yǐ cháng

have one's wish fulfilled/obtain (or get) one's wishes/achieve what one wishes/ obtain what is desired/have one's will/fulfil one's utmost ambitions

**【如坐针毡】** rú zuò zhēn zhān

feel as if sitting on a bed of nails — feel extremely un-

easy/ as if sitting on a spiked rug — in an extremely uncomfortable position/ lie (or sit) on a bed of thorns/ be (or sit) on pins and needles/ be on the anxious bench (or seat)/ be on tenterhooks/ like a cat on hot bricks/ like a hen on a hot girdle

**【茹毛饮血】** rú máo yǐn xuè

eat animal flesh raw and drink its blood (or eat birds and animals raw) — live the life of a primitive man

**【乳臭未干】** rǔ xiù wèi gān

still smell of one's mother's milk — be young and inexperienced/ one's mouth is full of pap/ be wet (or not dry) behind the ears/ be unfledged/ babes and sucklings

**【入不敷出】** rù bù fū chū

income can't cover outlay/ income falling short of the expenditure/ unable to make ends meet/ live beyond one's means

**【入国问俗】** rù guó wèn sú

on entering a country, inquire about its customs/ learn about customs and habits of the country one goes to

**【入境问禁】** rù jìng wèn jìn

on entering a country inquire about the prohibitions/ ask about taboos and bans upon arrival in a foreign country

**【入木三分】** rù mù sān fēn

“enter well into the board” — (calligraphy) having forceful strokes/ written in a forceful hand/(of ideas, views, observations) penetrating/ profound/keen

【入情入理】rù qíng rù lǐ

be fair and reasonable/ fair and sensible/perfectly logical and reasonable

【入乡随俗】rù xiāng suí sú

do in Rome as the Romans do

【软硬兼施】ruǎn yǐng jiān shī

use both tough (or hard) and soft tactics/ use both persuasion and force (or coercion)/ combine hard tactics with soft (or harsh and mild) measures/ couple threat with promises/ act tough and talk soft

【锐不可当】ruì bù kě dāng

cannot be checked (or be held back)/ be an irresistible force

【瑞雪兆丰年】ruì xuě zhào fēng nián

a fall of seasonable snow gives promise of a fruitful year/ a timely snow promises a good harvest/ winter snow signifies a year of good crops/ a snow year, a good year

【若即若离】ruò jì ruò lí

be neither friendly nor aloof/ maintain a lukewarm relationship/ partly accepting, partly rejecting/ keep sb at arm's length/ half-hearted

【若明若暗】ruò míng ruò àn

have a blurred (or an indistinct) picture of/ have a hazy notion about/have only a vague idea of sth

【若无其事】ruò wú qí shì

as if nothing had occurred/ remain indifferent/nonchalant/ calmly/ casually

【若要人不知,除非己莫为】ruò yào rén bù zhī, chǔ fēi jǐ mò wéi

if you do not want a thing to be known, the only way is not to do it/the only way to keep people from knowing sth is not to do it/do not do it if you don't want others to know it/ what is done by night appears by day

【若隐若现】ruò yǐn ruò xiàn

partly hidden and partly visible/ appear indistinctly

【若有所失】ruò yǒu suǒ shī

feel as if sth were missing/ feel lost/look distracted

【若有所思】ruò yǒu suǒ sī

seem lost in thought/ as if deep in thought/ as if thinking of sth/ look pensive

【弱不禁风】ruò bù jīn fēng

(of a person) too frail (or weak) to stand a gust of wind/extremely delicate/ fragile

【弱不胜衣】ruò bù shèng yī

too weak to bear the weight of the clothing

【弱肉强食】ruò ròu qiáng shí

the weak are the prey to the strong — the law of the

jungle/ the weak at the mercy of the strong/ the great fish eat up the small/

## S

【塞翁失马，安知非福】 sāi wēng shī mǎ, ān zhī fēi fú  
when the old man on the frontier lost his mare, who could have guessed it was a blessing in disguise? — a loss may turn out to be a gain/ loss sometimes spells gain/ nothing so bad as not to be good for sth

【三长两短】 sān cháng liǎng duǎn  
sth untoward/ unexpected misfortune/sth unfortunate, esp. death/ unhappy events

【三寸不烂之舌】 sān cùn bù làn zhī shé  
sb's eloquence/ (have) a silver tongue

【三番五次】 sān fān wǔ cì  
again and again/ time and again/ over and over again/ repeatedly

【三个臭皮匠，合成一个诸葛亮】 sān gè chòu pí jiàng, hé chéng yī gè zhū gě liàng  
three cobblers with their wits combined would equal Zhuge Liang the master mind — the wisdom of the masses exceeds that of the wisest individual/ two heads are better than one

**【三顾茅庐】** sān gù máo lú

make three calls at the thatched cottage — repeatedly request sb to take up a responsible post/ repeated and whole-hearted invitation

**【三句话不离本行】** sān jù huà bù lí běn háng

can hardly open one's mouth without talking shop/ talk about one's own trade from the outset of a conversation/ talk shop all the time/ always the trade talk

**【三令五申】** sān lìng wǔ shēn

repeated orders and instructions/ repeated injunctions

**【三人行必有我师】** sān rén xíng bì yǒu wǒ shī

if three of us are walking together, there will certainly be a teacher for me

**【三三两两】** sān sān liǎng liǎng

in small crowds/ in twos and threes

**【三生有幸】** sān shēng yǒu xìng

the good fortune of three lives — consider oneself most fortunate (to make sb's acquaintance)/ a fortunate meeting

**【三十六计, 走为上计】** sān shí liù jì, zǒu wéi shàng jì

of the thirty-six plans, running away is the best — the best thing to do now is to quit/ decamping is the best of the thirty-six stratagems

**【三思而行】** sān sī ér xíng

think thrice before you act/ look before you leap/  
score twice before you cut once

【三天打鱼,两天晒网】 sān tiān dǎ yú, liǎng tiān shài wǎng

spend three days fishing and two days drying nets —  
work by fits and starts/ go fishing for three days and  
dry the nets for two — lack of perseverance

【三头六臂】 sān tóu liù bì

with three heads and six arms — superhuman

【三位一体】 sān wèi yī tǐ

trinity/three forming an organic whole/three closely  
related/three welded into one/three in one

【三五成群】 sān wú chéng qún

in threes and fours/ in knots

【三心二意】 sān xīn èr yì

have (be in or be of) two minds/ a changeable mind/  
be double-minded/ be many-minded/ shilly-shally/un-  
decided/half-hearted

【三言两语】 sān yán liǎng yǔ

a few words spoken/in a few words/ in one word or  
two/in short

【三足鼎立】 sān zú dǐng lì

divided into three opposing parts

【散兵游勇】 sǎn bīng yóu yǒng

stragglers and disbanded soldiers

【丧魂落魄】 sàng hún luò pò

be driven to distraction/ be frightened out of one's life

【丧家之狗】sàng jiā zhī gǒu

stray (disowned or homeless) dogs (or curs)

【丧尽天良】sàng jìn tiān liáng

utterly devoid of conscience/ conscienceless/ heartless

【丧权辱国】sàng quán rǔ guó

humiliate the nation and forfeit its sovereignty/ surrender a country's sovereign rights under humiliating terms/ national betrayal

【丧心病狂】sàng xīn bīng kuáng

be seized with crazy ideas, losing all balance of judgement/ have cracked brains/ frenzied/ unscrupulous

【搔头弄姿】sāo tóu nòng zī

(of a woman) stroke one's hair in coquetry/ be coquettish

【扫地以尽】sǎo dì yǐ jìn

with all swept into the dust/ make a clean sweep

【色厉内荏】sè lì nèi rěn

firm in the countenance, but weak inside/ fierce of visage (or mien) but faint of heart/ be tough-looking outside but really timid within/ forcible-feeble

【森罗万象】sēn luó wàn xiàng

myriads of things/ everything under the sun

【杀回马枪】shā huí mǎ qiāng

make a backward thrust at one's pursuer/ wheel



around and hit back

【杀鸡取卵】shā jī qǔ luǎn

kill the hen to get all its eggs/ kill the goose that lays the golden eggs

【杀鸡吓猴】shā jī xià hóu

kill the chicken to frighten the monkey — punish sb as a warning to others

【杀鸡焉用牛刀】shā jī yān yòng niú dāo

what's the need for using a large knife to kill a fowl? / why should one break a butterfly (or fly) upon (or on) the wheel? / is it necessary to use a steam-hammer to crack nuts? / how could people use a sledge-hammer on a gnat?

【杀气腾腾】shā qì téng téng

have plenty of fight in one/ with a murderous look on one's face/be out to kill/ see things bloodshot/ bellicose

【杀人不见血】shā rén bù jiàn xuè

kill without spilling blood/ kill by subtle means/ destroy a person by smooth strategy

【杀人不眨眼】shā rén bù zhǎ yǎn

slaughter people without blinking an eye/kill without batting an eyelid/ murder sb in cold blood/ be trigger-crazy/ bloodthirsty

【杀人灭口】shā rén miè kǒu

kill all so that there won't be any eye-witness left

【杀人如麻】shā rén rú má

kill people like flies/ commit innumerable murders

【杀人越货】shā rén yuè huò

kill a person and seize his goods/ (of robbers) murder for property

【杀身成仁】shā shēn chéng rén

die to achieve virtue — die for a just cause/ sacrifice one's life to preserve one's integrity

【杀一儆百】shā yī jǐng bǎi

execute one as a warning to a hundred/ punish one as an example to others

【沙里淘金】shā lǐ táo jīn

wash grains of gold out of the sands — extract the essential from a large mass of material/ get a small return from great effort

【傻头傻脑】shǎ tóu shǎ nǎo

foolish-looking/ muddle-headed

【煞费苦心】shà fèi kǔ xīn

cudgel (or rack) one's brains/take great pains/be at great pains/with much ado/painstakingly/laboriously

【山高水长】shān-gāo shuǐ cháng

high as mountains and long as rivers — one's nobility or reputation lasts forever/(in praise of one's) deep grace and friendly sentiment

【山南海北】shān nán hǎi běi

south of the mountains and north of the seas — far and

wide/ all over the land

【山清水秀】shān qīng shuǐ xiù

green hills and clear waters — picturesque scenery/  
green mountains and blue waters — beautiful country  
scene

【山穷水尽】shān qióng shuǐ jìn

where the mountains and rivers end — at the end of  
one's rope (means, tether or resources)/be at one's  
wit's end/be on one's bone's/ be at one's last shift/be  
at low-water mark

【山雨欲来风满楼】shān yǔ yù lái fēng mǎn lóu

the wind sweeping through the tower heralds a rising  
storm in the mountains/ the rising wind forebodes the  
coming storm/ the turbulent wind precedes the moun-  
tain storm/ the gale is raging and the storm is about to  
burst

【山珍海错】shān zhēn hǎi cuò

delicacies from land and sea/ dainties of all kinds

【删繁就简】shān fán jiù jiǎn

simplify sth by cutting out the superfluous

【姍姍来迟】shān shān lái chí

be slow in coming/ be late

【煽风点火】shān fēng diǎn huǒ

inflame and agitate people/ fan (up) the fire (or  
flames)/fan up evil winds and flames/stir up trouble  
and create splits/blow the coals/instigate

【闪烁其辞】shǎn shuò qí cí

speak evasively/evade issues/dodge about (or around)/hedge/ non-committal

【善罢甘休】shàn bà gān xiū

let it go or give up lightly/leave the matter at that/ let it go at that

【善始善终】shàn shǐ shàn zhōng

begin well and end well/have a good beginning and a good ending/ do well from start to finish/ see sth through

【善有善报,恶有恶报】shàn yǒu shàn bào, è yǒu è bào

good will be rewarded with good, and evil with evil/ good has its reward and evil has its recompense

【善自为谋】shàn zì wéi móu

good at taking care of oneself

【擅离职守】shàn lí zhí shǒu

be absent from one's post without leave/ leave one's post without permission

【伤风败俗】shāng fēng bài sú

offend public decency/ pervert the manners and customs/ corrupt public morals/ injurious to public morality

【伤天害理】shāng tiān hài lǐ

do things offensive to God and reason—extremely savage, cruel and brutal

**【赏罚分明】** shǎng fá fēn míng

be strict and fair in meting out rewards and punishments

**【赏心悦目】** shǎng xīn yuè mù

find the scenery pleasing both the eye and the mind

**【上不着天,下不着地】** shàng bù zhuó tiān, xià bù zhuó dì

be suspended in mid-air

**【上谄下骄】** shàng chǎn xià jiāo

fawn upon one's superiors and look down upon those below/flatter those in high positions and despise those of lower ranks/ snobbish

**【上窜下跳】** shàng cuàn xià tiào

run around on sinister errands/run clandestine errands up and down the line

**【上梁不正下梁歪】** shàng liáng bù zhèng xià liáng wāi  
if the upper beam is not straight, the lower ones will go aslant — when those above behave unworthily, those below will do the same/ if the upper beam is crooked the lower ones are out of plumb — people follow the example of those in high positions/ fish begins to stink at the head**【上天无路,入地无门】** shàng tiān wú lù, rù dì wú mén  
there is no road to the heaven and no door into the earth — no way of escape/ in desperate straits/helpless, nowhere to turn

【上无片瓦,下无插针之地】 shàng wú piàn wǎ, xià wú chǎ zhēn zhī dì

have neither a tile over one's head nor a speck of land under one's feet to stick a needle (or an awl) — as poor as a church mouse

【上下其手】 shàng xià qí shǒu

practise fraud/ manoeuvre for some evil end

【上行下效】 shàng xíng xià xiào

those in subordinate positions will follow the example set by their superiors/ the doings of superiors are imitated by inferiors/ if a leader sets up a bad example, it will be followed by his subordinates/ those below follow the (usu. bad) example of those above/ the inferiors imitate the superiors

【稍纵即逝】 shāo zòng jí shì

transient/fleeting

【少安毋躁】 shǎo ān wú zào

take it easy, don't make a fuss/ please calm down a little and do not get excited/ don't be impatient/ wait for a while

【少见多怪】 shǎo jiàn duō guài

having seen little, get excited easily/ consider sth remarkable simply because one has not seen it before/ comment excitedly on a commonplace thing (out of ignorance or inexperience)/ things seldom seen are (regarded as) strange/shocked through lack of experi—

ence/ ignorant

【少头无尾】shǎo tóu wú wěi

imperfect/ unfinished

【少不更事】shào bù gēng shì

young and little-experienced/ green

【少年老成】shào nián lǎo chéng

have an old head on young shoulders/ a young person  
lacking in vigour and drive

【少壮不努力,老大徒伤悲】shào zhuàng bù nǔ lì, lǎo  
dà tú shāng bēi

if one doesn't exert oneself in youth, one will regret it  
in old age/ laziness in youth spells regret in old age/  
to idle away the time in youth will leave sorrow in (or  
at) age/ idle young, needy old

【舌敝唇焦】shé bì chún jiāo

talk till one's tongue and lips are parched/wear oneself  
out in pleading, expostulating, etc.

【舍本逐末】shě běn zhú mò

attend to trifles to the neglect of essentials/ grasp the  
shadow instead of the essence

【舍得一身剐,敢把皇帝拉下马】shě dé yī shēn guǒ,  
gǎn bǎ huáng dì lā xià mǎ

he who is not afraid of death by a thousand cuts dares  
to unhorse the emperor

【舍己救人】shě jǐ jiù rén

sacrifice one's life to save others

【舍己为人】shě jǐ wéi rén

sacrifice one's own interests for the sake of others/  
risk one's life for others/ self-sacrifice

【舍近求远】shě jìn qiú yuǎn

sacrifice the near for the distant/ seek far and wide for  
what lies close at hand/ go for the abstruse and forget  
the obvious

【舍车保帅】shě jū bǎo shuài

give up a rook to save the king (in chess) -- make mi-  
nor sacrifices to safeguard major interests

【舍生取义】shě shēng qǔ yì

lay down one's life for a just cause/ sacrifice oneself  
for justice/ die for principle/ prefer honor to life

【舍生忘死】shě shēng wàng sǐ

disregard one's own safety/ risk one's life

【设身处地】shè shēn chǔ dì

put oneself in sb else's position/ be considerate/ look  
at sth from the angle of others

【身败名裂】shēn bài míng liè

lose all standing and reputation/ bring disgrace and  
ruin upon oneself/ be utterly discredited/ one's per-  
sonal reputation is ruined

【身不由己】shēn bù yóu jǐ

lose one's balance (or control)/ constrained by circum-  
stances/ in spite of oneself

【身价百倍】shēn jià bǎi bèi



have a big rise in social status/ skyrocket to fame

【身教胜于言教】shēn jiào shèng yú yán jiào

practice (or example) is better than precept

【身临其境】shēn lín qí jìng

personally go through situation/ be personally on the scene

【身强力壮】shēn qiáng lì zhuàng

(of a person) strong/ tough/ sturdy

【身体力行】shēn tǐ lì xíng

earnestly practise what one advocates/ practise what one preaches/ set an example by personally taking part

【身外之物】shēn wài zhī wù

external things/ mere worldly possessions

【身先士卒】shēn xiān shì zú

lead one's men in a charge/ charge at the head of one's men

【身在福中不知福】shēn zài fú zhōng bù zhī fú

growing up in happiness, one often fails to appreciate what happiness really means/ not appreciate the happy life one enjoys

【深不可测】shēn bù kě cè

have no bottom/ fathomless/ plumbless/ abysmal

【深藏若虚】shēn cáng ruò xū

be modest about one's talent or learning/ not be given to boasting or showing off

【深仇大恨】shēn chóu dà hèn

have a deep (immense, bitter and deep-seated or profound) hatred for/ great enmity and deep hostility

【深更半夜】shēn gēng bàn yè

at dead of night/in the depth of night/the midnight hours

【深沟高垒】shēn gōu gāo lěi

deep trenches and high ramparts—strong defence

【深居简出】shēn jū jiǎn chū

dwell in deep seclusion and rarely come out/live in the seclusion of one's own home/ live with few social contacts/ live a secluded life/ live in solitude

【深明大义】shēn míng dà yì

know clearly the right thing to do and the principles to follow/be deeply conscious of the righteousness of a cause

【深谋远虑】shēn móu yuǎn lǜ

think deeply and plan carefully/ be circumspect and far-sighted/ farseeing and thoughtful/ foresighted

【深情厚谊】shēn qíng hòu yì

profound sentiments of friendship

【深入浅出】shēn rù qiǎn chū

(of articles or speeches) be described penetratingly with simple language/ explain the profound in simple terms

【深入人心】shēn rù rén xīn

win support among the people/ capture the hearts of the people/ strike root in the hearts of the people/ strike fire into one's heart/ strike a deep chord in the hearts of the people/find its way deep into the hearts of the people

【深山老林】shēn shān lǎo lín

remote, thickly forested mountains

【深思熟虑】shēn sī shú lǜ

deep and careful consideration/ long deliberation/ ponder deeply(over)/chew the cud/ cogitative

【深文周纳】shēn wén zhōu nà

(of feudal officials, judges, etc.) use every means to have an innocent person pronounced guilty/ convict sb by deliberately misinterpreting the law/frame up and punish severely

【深恶痛绝】shēn wù tòng jué

hate deeply/ cherish an undying(a bitter, implacable or deep-seated) hatred for/ hate like poison/ abhor/ detest

【神不知,鬼不觉】shén bù zhī, guǐ bù jué

unknown to god and ghost — (do sth) without anybody knowing it/ in great secrecy

【神采奕奕】shén cǎi yì yì

glowing with health and radiating vigour/ brim over with health and spirits/ brim with energy and vitality/ beaming and buoyant in spirits/ as fit as a fiddle/in

pretty good fettle

【神出鬼没】shén chū guǐ mò

come and go like a shadow/ appear and disappear mysteriously/ alert and quick

【神工鬼斧】shén gōng guǐ fǔ

extraordinary as if done by the spirits/ supernatural (or uncanny) workmanship/ superlative craftsmanship

【神乎其神】shén hū qí shén

miraculous/ fantastic/ wonderful

【神魂颠倒】shén hún diān dǎo

be infatuated/ be out of one's mind/ one's mind is confused by/ be carried away with/ be mad about (sb)/ enrapt

【神机妙算】shén jī miào suàn

wonderful foresight/ ability to divine the unknown

【神气十足】shén qì shí zú

put on grand airs/ very arrogant

【神妙莫测】shén miào mò cè

so subtle as to be difficult to guess what comes next

【神色自若】shén sè zì ruò

be perfectly calm and collected/ show composure and presence of mind

【神思恍惚】shén sī huǎng hū

in confused state of mind/ be distracted

【神通广大】shén tōng guǎng dà

have far-reaching supernatural power/ be infinitely re-

sourceful

【审时度势】shěn shí duó shì

judge the hour and size up the situation

【甚嚣尘上】shèn xiāo chén shàng

the dust and din of sb fill the air/ making a lot of noise/ cause a temporary clamour

【升官发财】shēng guān fā cái

win promotion and get rich/ (be out for) power and money

【升堂入室】shēng táng rù shì

pass through the hall into the inner chamber — have profound scholarship/ become highly proficient in one's profession

【生搬硬套】shēng bān yìng tào

copy mechanically in disregard of specific conditions/ copy mechanically and apply indiscriminately/ apply or copy mechanically

【生动活泼】shēng dòng huó pō

vivid and vigorous/ lively

【生花妙笔】shēng huā miào bǐ

(straight-from) a gifted pen/ (written with) a graphic pen

【生拉活扯】shēng lā huó chě

drag sb out to do sth by force as well as by persuasion/ stretch the meaning (in speaking)

【生离死别】shēng lí sǐ bié



eternal separation between loved ones in life or death/  
part never to meet again/ part for ever

【生灵涂炭】shēng líng tú tàn

the people are amid mire and charcoal — in great distress/  
the people are plunged into an abyss of misery/  
people in great affliction

【生龙活虎】shēng lóng huó hǔ

doughty as a dragon and lively as a tiger/ brimming  
(or bursting) with energy/ full of vim and vigour/be  
alive and kicking/ with furious energy

【生米煮成熟饭】shēng mǐ zhǔ chéng shú fàn

the rice is already cooked — what's done can't be undone

【生气勃勃】shēng qì bó bó

dynamic and vigorous/ alive with activity/ alive and  
kicking/ full of life (or vitality)/ be vivid with life/  
like a steam engine/ spirited

【生杀予夺】shēng shā yǔ duó

hold power over sb's life and property/ have sb completely in one's power

【生死存亡】shēng sǐ cún wáng

question of survival or not/ question of living or dying/  
life or death/ life-and-death

【生死攸关】shēng sǐ yǒu guān

(a matter of) life and death/ (a matter of) vital importance/  
life-or-death

【生吞活剥】shēng tūn huó bō

swallow sth raw and whole — accept sth uncritically/  
gulp down uncritically/ transplant indiscriminately/  
force an interpretation of text without understanding/  
skin alive

【生于忧患,死于安乐】shēng yú yōu huàn, sǐ yú ān lè

life springs from sorrow and calamity, death comes  
from ease and pleasure

【声东击西】shēng dōng jī xī

make a feint to the east but attack in the west/ pre-  
tend to attack the east while attacking the west/ shoot  
at a pigeon and kill a crow/ look one way and row an-  
other/ make a feint

【声泪俱下】shēng lèi jù xià

shedding tears while speaking/ in a tearful voice

【声名狼藉】shēng míng láng jí

with a bad reputation/ fall into disrepute/ one's repu-  
tation is ruined/ notorious/ disreputable/ unsavory

【声色俱厉】shēng sè jù lì

severe (or stern) in voice and countenance

【声势浩大】shēng shì hào dà

great in strength and impetus/ a large-scale/ mam-  
moth/ influential/ grand

【声嘶力竭】shēng sī lì jié

shout oneself hoarse/ shout oneself blue in the face/

shout at the top of one's voice

【声威大震】shēng wēi dà zhèn

gain great fame and high prestige/ gain resounding fame

【省吃俭用】shěng chī jiǎn yòng

live frugally

【胜败乃兵家之常】shèng bài nǎi bīng jiā zhī cháng

defeats or victories are ordinary things to a general

【胜不骄，败不馁】shèng bù jiāo, bài bù něi

not dizzy with success, nor discouraged by failure/ not puffed up by success, undismayed by failure

【胜任愉快】shèng rèn yú kuài

equal to the task/ very competent at job/ be well qualified

【盛极一时】shèng jí yī shí

prevail for a time/ be in fashion in one's time (or for a time)/ be all the rage at the moment

【盛名之下，其实难副】shèng míng zhī xià, qí shí nán fù

it is hard to live up to a great reputation

【盛气凌人】shèng qì líng rén

be pushy and overbearing/ carry an arrogant air/ put on airs and browbeat others/ lift up one's horn/ get up on one's hind legs/ arrogant/ domineering

【盛情难却】shèng qíng nán què

be ungracious not to accept sb's invitation/ difficult to



refuse such kindness

【盛衰荣辱】shèng shuāi róng rǔ

prosperity and decline, glory and humiliation/ rise and fall/ the ups and downs/ vicissitudes of life

【尸横遍野】shī héng biàn yě

a field littered with corpses

【尸位素餐】shī wèi sù cān

hold down a job without doing a stroke of work/ get pay without doing any work/ neglect the duties of an office while taking the pay/ hold a sinecure job and eat white rice

【失败者成功之母】shī bài zhě chéng gōng zhī mǔ

failure is the mother of success

【失魂落魄】shī hún luò pò

be driven to distraction/ be scared out of one's wits

【失之东隅，收之桑榆】shī zhī dōng yú, shōu zhī sāng yú

lose at sunrise and gain at sunset -- make up on the roundabouts what you lose on the swings/ what one loses on the swings one gets back on the roundabouts

【失之交臂】shī zhī jiāo bì

lose (opportunity or sth) close at hand/ fail to meet sb by a narrow chance/ miss sth very desirable/ miss a good chance

【师出无名】shī chū wú míng

dispatch troops without a just cause/ send army out

without a righteous cause/ there is no excuse for the campaign

【师心自用】shī xīn zì yòng

self-opinionated

【师直为壮】shī zhí wéi zhuàng

an army fighting for a just cause has high morale/ a troop fighting for the just is invincible

【十恶不赦】shí è bù shè

guilty beyond forgiveness/ guilty of unpardonable evil/ unpardonable crime

【十目所视，十手所指】shí mù suǒ shì, shí shǒu suǒ zhǐ

with many eyes watching and many fingers pointing — one cannot do wrong without being seen/ all eyes see it and all fingers point to it — useless to hide

【十拿九稳】shí ná jiǔ wěn

nine chances (or cases) out of ten/ 90 percent sure/ practically certain/ the matter is well in hand/ ten to one/ in the bag

【十年寒窗】shí nián hán chuāng

persevere in one's long-term studies in spite of hardships

【十年树木，百年树人】shí nián shù mù, bǎi nián shù rén

it takes ten years to grow trees but a hundred years to bring up a generation of good men

【十全十美】shí quán shí měi

be perfect in every way/ be flawless and perfect/ leave nothing to be desired/ be all it should be/ the pink of perfection/ the acme of perfection

【十室九空】shí shì jiǔ kōng

nine houses out of ten are deserted — a scene of desolation after a plague or war when the population is decimated/ almost all (nine-tenths) houses empty after raid/ nine out of ten houses are stripped bare

【十万火急】shí wàn huǒ jí

extremely urgent/ most emergent/ posthaste

【石沉大海】shí chén dà hǎi

like a stone dropped (or sunk) into the sea — it disappears forever (or it has produced no reaction)

【石破天惊】shí pò tiān jīng

devastating (opinion or event)/ a great concussion or shock/ earth-shattering and heaven-battering/ remarkably original and forceful (music, writing, etc.)

【识时务者为俊杰】shí shí wù zhě wéi jùn jié

whosoever understands (the signs of) the times is a great man/ he is wise who understands the times/ those who suit their actions to the times are wise/ a brave man knows how to bow to circumstances/ time-servers are clever

【识途老马】shí tú lǎo mǎ

an old horse which knows the way — a person of rich

experience/a wise old bird

【时不可失】shí bù kě shī

must not lose the opportunity

【时不我待】shí bù wǒ dài

time and tide wait for no man

【时不我与】shí bù wǒ yǔ

time is running out/ lost time is never found again

【时乖命蹇】shí guāi mìng jiǎn

have bad luck in life/ be born under an evil star/one's  
sun is set/ be down on one's luck/ ill-fated/unfortu-  
nate

【时势造英雄】shí shì zào yīng xióng

the times produce their heroes

【时移俗易】shí yí sú yì

customs change with the passage of time — other  
times, other manners

【实事求是】shí shì qiú shì

seek truth from facts/get the truth by verification of  
the facts/ be practical and realistic/ in a truthseeking  
way/ based on facts/ true to facts/ down-to-earth  
spirit

【拾金不昧】shí jīn bù mèi

not pocket the money one picks up/ return the money  
found

【拾人牙慧】shí rén yá huì

pick up phrases from sb and pass them off as one's

own/ offer another's ideas as one's own/steal others' ideas (or sayings)/ pick up what others say or write/ plagiarize

【食而不化】shí ér bù huà

eat without digesting—read without understanding

【食古不化】shí gǔ bù huà

read ancient teachings without digesting them — be slave to the ancients/swallow ancient learning without digesting it/be pedantic

【食肉寝皮】shí ròu qīn pí

want to eat his flesh and sleep on his hide—swear revenge

【食言而肥】shí yán ér féi

“eat one's words”—fail to live up to promise/fail to make good one's promise/break faith with sb/break a promise/be worse than one's word/go back on one's word/swallow one's words

【史无前例】shǐ wú qián lì

without precedent in history/unprecedented in history/without parallel in history/without (or beyond) example/unheard of

【矢口抵赖】shǐ kǒu dǐ lài

refuse to admit even unto death/flatly deny/never admitted

【矢志不移】shǐ zhì bù yí

vow to adhere to one's chosen course/swear will never

change

【始终不懈】shǐ zhōng bù xiè

forever strive without cease

【始终不渝】shǐ zhōng bù yú

unswervingly/ consistent/ steadyfast

【始终如一】shǐ zhōng rú yī

the same from beginning to end/ consistent/ constant/ persistent

【世上无难事，只怕有心人】shì shàng wú nán shì, zhǐ pà yǒu xīn rén

nothing in the world is difficult for one who sets his mind to (or on) it/ nothing is impossible to a willing heart/ where there is a will, there is a way/ it is dogged that does it

【世世代代】shì shì dài dài

for generations/ from generation to generation/ generation after generation

【世态炎凉】shì tài yán liáng

inconstancy (or fickleness) of human relationships/ the way of the world, now hot, now cold

【世外桃源】shì wài táo yuán

the Land of Peach Blossoms — a fictitious land of peace, away from the turmoil of the world/ a haven of peace

【视而不见】shì ér bù jiàn

look but see not/ shut one's eyes to/ turn a blind

eye to

【视而不见,听而不闻】shì ér bù jiàn, tīng ér bù wén

look but see not, listen but hear not/ look at but not  
pay attention to, listen to but hear nothing

【视如敝屣】shì rú bì xǐ

regard as worn-out shoes/ cast aside as worthless

【视如寇仇】shì rú kòu chóu

regard (or look upon) sb as one's enemy

【视若无睹】shì ruò wú dǔ

take no notice of what has been seen/ shut one's eyes  
to (or against)/ turn a blind eye to

【视死如归】shì sǐ rú guī

look upon death as going home/ look death calmly in  
the face/ face death unflinchingly (or with equanimi-  
ty)/ take death calmly ("like going home")/ defy  
death

【视同儿戏】shì tóng ér xì

consider as mere children's play/ treat (a serious  
matter) as a trifle/ trifle with

【视同路人】shì tóng lù rén

regard as a stranger

【视为畏途】shì wéi wèi tú

regard as dangerous/ be afraid to undertake/ keep  
away from sth

【视为知己】shì wéi zhī jǐ

regard as a good friend

## 【势不可当】shì bù kě dāng

be irresistible/ come down like a brick/ carry all (everything or the world) before one/ overwhelming

## 【势不两立】shì bù liǎng lì

impossible for both to exist together/ one of the two must be destroyed/ irreconcilably hostile to each other/ mutually exclusive/ completely incompatible/ diametrically opposed to/ extremely antagonistic/ implacable hostility/ at the opposite pole to/ irreconcilable

## 【势成骑虎】shì chéng qí hǔ

in the position of one riding a tiger — unable to get down and dangerous to go on

## 【势均力敌】shì jūn lì dí

match each other in strength/ be evenly matched/ be all square/ be in an equilibrium/ a Roland for an Oliver/ nip and tuck (or nip-and-tuck)/ equal (or even) scale

## 【势如破竹】shì rú pò zhú

like splitting a bamboo — easily overcome all obstacles/ press on irresistibly from a commanding height/ like a hot knife cutting through butter/ with irresistible force

## 【势焰熏天】shì yàn xūn tiān

one's position and power dominate the world like flame darkening the sky

## 【势在必行】shì zài bì xíng



be imperative (under the circumstances)

【事半功倍】shì bàn gōng bèi

get twice the result with half the effort/ half the work with double the result

【事倍功半】shì bèi gōng bàn

get half the results with double the effort/ do twice the work with half of results

【事必躬亲】shì bì gōng qīn

see (or attend) to everything oneself/ take care of every single thing personally

【事不关己,高高挂起】shì bù guān jǐ, gāo gāo guà qǐ

let things drift if they do not affect one personally

【事不宜迟】shì bù yí chí

one must lose no time in doing it/ we must attend to the matter immediately/ the matter brooks no delay

【事出有因】shì chū yǒu yīn

there is good reason for it/ it is by no means accidental/ where there's reek, there's heat/ every why has a (or its) wherefore

【事非经过不知难】shì fēi jīng guò bù zhī nán

you never know how hard a task is until you have done it yourself

【事过境迁】shì guò jīng qiān

the incident is over and the circumstances are different/ the matter is past and the situation has changed

【事后诸葛亮】shì hòu zhū gé liàng

claim wisdom after the event

【事实胜于雄辩】shì shí shèng yú xióng biàn

facts speak louder than words

【事与愿违】shì yǔ yuàn wéi

things go contrary to one's wishes/ events do not happen as one wishes/ things go athwart

【事在人为】shì zài rén wéi

it all depends on human effort/ man is the determining factor in doing things

【是非曲直】shì fēi qū zhí

rights and wrongs/ truth and falsehood/ merits and demerits

【是非自有公论】shì fēi zì yǒu gōng lùn

the public will judge the rights and wrongs of a case/ the public is the best judge

【是古非今】shì gǔ fēi jīn

denounce the present and praise antiquity/ praise the past to condemn the present

【是可忍，孰不可忍】shì kě rěn, shú bù kě rěn

if this could be endured, what else may not? / if this can be tolerated, what cannot? / how can this be tolerated?

【拭目以待】shì mù yǐ dài

wait and see/ on the alert/ watchful

【恃才傲物】shì cái ào wù

rely on one's own skill (or ability) and look down upon others/ self-conceited and insolent on account of one's ability/ be inordinately proud of one's ability/ be conceited and contemptuous

【恃强凌弱】shì qiáng líng ruò

use one's strength to bully the weak

【适得其反】shì dé qí fǎn

run counter to one's desires/ lead to just the opposite/ accomplish the very opposite/ be just the opposite of what one wishes/ be just the reverse/ on the contrary

【适逢其会】shì féng qí huì

happen to be present at the right moment

【适可而止】shì kě ér zhǐ

stop before going too far/ know when or where to stop/ stop where you reach the limit/ be satisfied with what is proper/ not overdo it/ a little wind kindles, much puts out the fire

【嗜杀成性】shì shā chéng xìng

bloodthirsty/ bloodsucking

【誓不罢休】shì bù bà xiū

swear not to stop (or rest)

【誓不两立】shì bù liǎng lì

swear not to coexist with one's enemy/ resolve to destroy the enemy or die in the attempt/ be irreconcilable

【誓死不二】shì sǐ bù èr

swear to be loyal forever

【噬脐莫及】shì qí mò jí

it's too late to repent

【收回成命】shōu huí chéng mìng

countermand an order/ revoke a command

【手不释卷】shǒu bù shì juǎn

be unwilling to put down the book in one's hand/always have a book in one's hand/ be a diligent reader/  
be very studious

【手到病除】shǒu dào bìng chú

(in praise of a doctor's skill) sickness retires at his touch

【手急眼快】shǒu jí yǎn kuài

quick of eye and deft of hand/ dexterous/ adroit

【手忙脚乱】shǒu máng jiǎo luàn

busy and bustling without order or method/ running around in circles/ in a great bustle/ be thrown into confusion/ in a frantic rush/ in a muddle

【手无寸铁】shǒu wú cùn tiě

bare-handed/ unarmed/ defenseless

【手无缚鸡之力】shǒu wú fù jī zhī lì

lack the strength to truss up a chicken — too feeble/  
too weak

【手舞足蹈】shǒu wǔ zú dǎo

dance with (or for) joy

【手足无措】shǒu zú wú cuò

have no room to put one's hands and feet — at a loss  
what to do/all in a fluster/ disconcerted/ perplexed

【守口如瓶】shǒu kǒu rú píng

keep the mouth shut like a bottle — breathe not a single word/ keep one's tongue between one's teeth/ be tight-mouthed/ be tight-lipped/ be secret as the grave/ (as ) dumb (or close) as an oyster

【守株待兔】shǒu zhū dài tù

stand by a stump waiting for more hares to dash themselves against it — trust to chance and windfalls/ wait for gains without pains

【首当其冲】shǒu dāng qí chōng

be the first to be affected/ stand in the breach/ bear the brunt

【首屈一指】shǒu qū yī zhǐ

come first on the list/ be second to none/ top the world (in a certain respect)

【首鼠两端】shǒu shǔ liǎng duān

be in two minds/ be undecided in course of action/ shilly-shally

【首尾相应】shǒu wěi xiāng yīng

beginning and end correspond with each other

【寿比南山】shòu bǐ nán shān

“may you live as long as the southern mountain”  
(formula of birthday congratulations)

【寿终正寝】shòu zhōng zhèng qǐn

different to/ ignore

【数典忘祖】shǔ diǎn wàng zǔ

give all the historical facts except those of one's own ancestors/ forget one's own origins/ be ignorant of the history of one's own country/ forget one's ancestors or ancestral tradition

【数一数二】shǔ yī shǔ èr

count at the top, among the best/ count as one of the very best/ ranking very high

【鼠目寸光】shǔ mù cùn guāng

a mouse can see only an inch—see only what is under one's nose/ see no further than one's nose/ (as) short-sighted as mice

【鼠窃狗盗】shǔ qiè gǒu dào

filch like rats and snatch like dogs—play petty tricks on the sly

【蜀犬吠日】shǔ quǎn fèi rì

in Sichuan dogs bark at the sun (because it's a rare sight in that misty region) — an ignorant person makes a fuss about sth which he alone finds strange

【束手待毙】shù shǒu dài bì

fold one's hands and await destruction/ wait for death with tied hands/ wait for one's doom with folded arms/ wait helplessly for death/ resign oneself to extinction

【束手就擒】shù shǒu jiù qín

submit to arrest with folded arms/ allow oneself to

be seized without putting up a fight

【束手束脚】shù shǒu shù jiǎo

undue caution/ over-cautiousness

【束手无策】shù shǒu wú cè

be like having one's hands tied — without resource/  
be at a loss what to do/ find oneself in the mire/ feel  
quite hopeless/ not know which way to turn/ at one's  
wit's end/ nail-biting

【束之高阁】shù zhī gāo gé

bundle sth up and place it on the shelf/ lay aside and  
neglect/ put aside from duty (or service)/ put sth  
away unheeded/ shelve (a matter)/ pigeonhole

【树碑立传】shù bēi lì zhuàn

glorify sb by erecting a monument to him and writing  
his biography — build up sb's public image/ glorify sb  
by singing the praises of his life/ sing in praise and  
eulogy of

【树大招风】shù dà zhāo fēng

a tall tree catches the wind — a person in a high posi-  
tion is liable to be attacked

【树倒猢猻散】shù dǎo hú sūn sǎn

when the tree falls the monkeys scatter — when an in-  
fluential person falls from power, his hangers-on dis-  
perse/ monkeys disperse when tree falls — members  
run away when a family or institution falls/ rats  
leave a sinking ship

【树高千丈,叶落归根】 shù gāo qiān zhàng, yè luò guī gēn

a tree may grow a thousand *zhang* high, but its leaves fall back to the roots — a person residing away from home eventually returns to his native soil

【树欲静而风不止】 shù yù jìng ér fēng bù zhǐ

the tree desires stillness but the wind will not cease/  
the trees may prefer calm but the wind will not subside — contradictions exist universally as class struggle is inevitable in class society

【率由旧章】 shuài yóu jiù zhāng

follow the beaten track/ observe the old rules/ act in accordance with established rules

【双管齐下】 shuāng guǎn qí xià

paint a picture with two brushes at the same time — work along both lines/ do both things simultaneously

【爽然若失】 shuǎng rán ruò shī

not know what to do/ be at a loss

【水到渠成】 shuǐ dào qú chéng

where water flows, a channel is formed — when conditions are ripe, success will come/ canal is formed when water comes — sth achieved without effort

【水滴石穿】 shuǐ dī shí chuān

dripping water wears through a rock — constant effort brings success/ constant dropping wears away a stone/ little strokes fell great oaks



**【水火不相容】** shuǐ huǒ bù xiāng róng

be incompatible as fire and water/ water and fire are antagonistic — mutual aversion/ exclude (or be opposed to) each other like fire and water/ agree like cats and dogs/ irreconcilable

**【水火无情】** shuǐ huǒ wú qíng

floods and fires have no mercy for anybody

**【水落石出】** shuǐ luò shí chū

when the water subsides the rocks emerge — the whole thing comes to light/ doubts will clear up when facts are known/ the truth will prevail in the end/ everything is thrashed out/ the truth is (or comes) out/ the murder is out

**【水乳交融】** shuǐ rǔ jiāo róng

mixed like water and milk — inseparable/ as well blended as milk and water — in complete harmony/ complete understanding between friends/ get along swimmingly with each other

**【水深火热】** shuǐ shēn huǒ rè

deep water and scorching fire — an abyss of suffering/ plunged into deep water and tormented by the heat of fires — bitterest sufferings of the people/ keep in suffering/ in deep waters (or distress)/ dire suffering/ extreme misery

**【水泄不通】** shuǐ xiè bù tōng

not even a drop of water could trickle through — be

crowded (closely besieged or tightly surrounded)/  
(of crowd, audience) tightly packed/ (of road) so  
jammed as to be impassable/ like (or as thick as )  
rabbits in a warren

【水涨船高】shuǐ zhǎng chuán gāo

when the river rises the boat goes up (or the boat  
floats high) — particular things improve with the im-  
provement of the general situation/ ship rises with  
the tide

【水至清则无鱼】shuǐ zhì qīng zé wú yú

when the water is too clear there are no fish — one  
should not demand absolute purity/ things do not ex-  
ist in absolute purity

【水中捞月】shuǐ zhōng lāo yuè

catch (or fish for) the moon in the water — make im-  
practical or vain efforts/ dredge up the moon from  
the water — futile phantasy/ fish in the air/ cry for  
the moon

【吮痂舐痔】shǔn yōng shì zhì

suck (or lick) ulcers and piles of another person —  
play the lickboot/ sycophancy

【顺理成章】shùn lǐ chéng zhāng

to write well, you must follow a logical train of  
thought/ to do some work well, you must follow a  
rational line/ speak (or write) logically

【顺手牵羊】shùn shǒu qiān yáng

lead away a goat in passing — pick up sth on the sly/

lead away the sheep off hand — take sth that doesn't belong to oneself/ pick up sth in passing/ walk away (or off) with sth/ go on (or upon) the scamp

【顺水人情】shùn shuǐ rén qíng

a favour done at little cost to oneself

【顺水推舟】shùn shuǐ tuī zhōu

push the boat along with the current — make use of an opportunity to gain one's end/ do sth without extra effort

【顺藤摸瓜】shùn téng mō guā

follow the vine to get the melon — track down sb or sth by following clues

【顺之者昌, 逆之者亡】shùn zhī zhě chāng, nì zhī zhě wáng

those who submit will prosper, those who resist shall perish (said of the arbitrary, brutal rule of a tyrant)

【瞬息万变】shùn xī wàn biàn

undergoing a myriad changes in the twinkling of an eye/ fast changing/ change quickly

【说曹操, 曹操到】shuō cáo cāo, cáo cāo dào

talk of the devil and he will appear/ to mention the wolf's name is to see the same/ speak of angels, and you will hear their wings

【说长道短】shuō cháng dào duǎn

discuss the failings of others/ find fault with/ back-bite/ gossip

【说到做到】shuō dào zuò dào

do what one says/ match one's deeds to one's words/  
live up to one's word

【说来话长】shuō lái huà cháng

it's a long story

【说一不二】shuō yī bù èr

mean what one says/ stand by one's word/ never  
make a promise one cannot keep

【硕大无朋】shuò dà wú péng

of unparalleled size/ gigantic

【硕果仅存】shuò guǒ jǐn cún

one of the few still left/ rare survival

【司空见惯】sī kōng jiàn guàn

accustomed to seeing such things, they are not re-  
garded as strange/ it is quite common for/ a matter  
of repeated occurrence/ a common sight/ a common  
occurrence/ familiar

【司马昭之心,路人皆知】sī mǎ zhāo zhī xīn, lù rén jiē zhī

Sima Zhao's ill intent is known to all — the villain's  
design is obvious/ this Sima Zhao trick is obvious to  
every man in the street — all too evident

【丝丝入扣】sī sī rù kòu

(done) with meticulous care and flawless artistry/  
(story plot) intricately woven together

【私相授受】sī xiāng shòu shòu

privately give and privately accept/ make an illicit transfer

【私心杂念】sī xīn zá niàn

selfish ideas and personal considerations

【斯文扫地】sī wén sǎo dì

the literate is swept into the dust — disgrace the intelligentsia/ bring disgrace on the intellectuals

【死不瞑目】sǐ bù míng mù

not close one's eyes when one dies — die with a grievance or everlasting regret/ die with injustice unredressed or with one's wishes not fulfilled

【死得其所】sǐ dé qí suǒ

die a worthy death

【死灰复燃】sǐ huī fù rán

the dying ashes burn again — the buried past comes alive again (or defeated enemies stage a comeback)/ dying embers flaring up (or glowing) again/ come to life again/ rise again from the ashes

【死记硬背】sǐ jì yìng bèi

mechanical memorizing/ learn by rote

【死里逃生】sǐ lǐ táo shēng

escape by the skin of one's teeth/ barely escape with one's life/ escape by a hair-breadth/ have a narrow escape/ a close shave

【死马当活马医】sǐ mǎ dāng huó mǎ yī

doctor a dead horse as if it were still alive — not give

up for lost/ try last resort to save hopeless situation/  
make every possible effort

【死气沉沉】sǐ qì chén chén

lose one's vitality/ without vitality/ without anima-  
tion/ politically apathetic/ like a log/ lifeless/ spirit-  
less/ stagnant/ dull/ dreary/ inert

【死皮赖脸】sǐ pí lài liǎn

thick-skinned and hard to shake off/ brazen-faced  
and unreasonable

【死去活来】sǐ qù huó lái

come round after fainting/ revive when apparently  
dead/ hovering between life and death/ half dead half  
alive

【死无对证】sǐ wú duì zhèng

the dead cannot bear witness

【死心塌地】sǐ xīn tā dì

death will not make him change—of an unchangeable  
disposition/ be dead set on/ be hell-bent on/  
die-hard

【死有余辜】sǐ yǒu yú gū

even death would be too good for him/ one's crime  
deserves more than death/ even death would not ex-  
piate all one's crimes

【死于非命】sǐ yú fēi mìng

die an unnatural (or violent) death

【四分五裂】sì fēn wǔ liè

be badly split and disintegrated/ be rent by disunity/  
be all split up/ be broken up/ be torn up/ be disrupt-  
ed/ fall apart/go (or come) to pieces/ disintegrate

【四海为家】sì hǎi wéi jiā

settle down in any corner of the world for certain  
cause/ make one's home wherever one is

【四海之内皆兄弟】sì hǎi zhī nèi jiē xiōng dì

“all the people of the world are brothers”/“within  
the four seas all men are brothers”

【四面八方】sì miàn bā fāng

on every side/ all directions/ all quarters/ all  
around/ far and near

【四面楚歌】sì miàn chǔ gē

be surrounded by the enemy on four sides/ be be-  
sieged (or assailed) on all sides/ under fire from all  
quarters/ be utterly isolated/ be in dire straits/ be  
driven to the wall/ land oneself in a tight place

【四平八稳】sì píng bā wěn

very steady/ very well disposed indeed/ well orga-  
nized/ lacking in initiative and overcautious

【四体不勤,五谷不分】sì tǐ bù qín, wǔ gǔ bù fēn

can neither use one's four limbs nor tell the five  
grains apart (said of old-style intellectuals) / can  
neither do physical work nor distinguish rice from  
wheat

【四通八达】sì tōng bā dá

extend (lead or communicate) in all directions/ accessible from all directions/ open to traffic from each direction/ open out on all sides

【似是而非】sì shì ér fēi

appear what it is really not/ like the reality, but not so/ apparently right (or true) but actually wrong/ look right, but really wrong/ as like as chalk and cheese/ specious

【肆无忌惮】sì wú jì dǎn

scruple at nothing/ without any scruples/ reckless and unbridled/ act outrageously/ run riot/ unscrupulously/ brazenly/ unprincipled/ unconscionable/ unbridled

【耸人听闻】sǒng rén tīng wén

deliberately exaggerate so as to create a sensation/ arrest one's attention/ create a great sensation/ sensation-mongering/ sensational

【耸入云霄】sǒng rù yún xiāo

tower into the clouds/ towering to the skies/ rise above the clouds

【送旧迎新】sòng jiù yíng xīn

see off the old and welcome the new/ ring out the Old Year and ring in the New

【送往迎来】sòng wǎng yíng lái

see off those who depart and welcome those who arrive/ speed the parting guests and welcome the new arrivals



【颂古非今】sòng gǔ fēi jīn

eulogize the past at the expense of the present

【搜索枯肠】sōu suǒ kū cháng

rack (or ransack) one's brains (for fresh ideas or apt expressions)

【俗不可耐】sù bù kě nài

unbearably common/ unbearably vulgar

【夙兴夜寐】sù xīng yè mèi

rise early and retire late—hard at work night and day

【肃然起敬】sù rán qǐ jìng

be filled with deep veneration/ a feeling of profound respect

【素昧平生】sù mèi píng shēng

have never met before/ have never had the honour of making sb's acquaintance/ know nothing about sb

【速战速决】sù zhàn sù jué

fight a quick battle to force a quick decision

【随波逐流】suí bō zhú liú

go (or swim) with the stream/ go with the current (tide, times or crowd)/ drift with the tide (or current)/ follow the current (or crowd)/ follow the winds and waves/ sail with the stream/ serve the hour (or time)/ time-serving

【随风转舵】suí fēng zhuǎn duò

sail (or tack) with the wind/ trim one's sails/ take one's cue from changing conditions

【随机应变】suí jī yìng biàn

adapt oneself to changing conditions/ act according to circumstances/ rise to the occasion/ do as the circumstances dictate/ adjust to changing circumstances/ decide according to changing situation/ be guided by the turn of events/ use (or act on) one's own discretion/ make decisions on the spot/ change to suit the occasion/ play to the score/ as occasion demands

【随声附和】suí shēng fù hè

echo what others say/ agree to what other people say/ chime in with others/ follow the crowd/ follow the majority blindly/ yes-men add their voices to the chorus

【随心所欲】suí xīn suǒ yù

have (or get) one's own way/ follow one's inclinations/ do as one pleases/ do as the heart desires/ at one's own sweet will/ in a slipshod way/ wilfully/ arbitrarily

【随遇而安】suí yù ér ān

feel at home wherever one is/ be able to adapt oneself to different circumstances

【损人利己】sǔn rén lì jǐ

harm others to benefit oneself/ injure others for the sake of one's own advantage/ seek satisfaction for

oneself at the cost of others/ benefit oneself at the expense of others/ reap profits at the expense of others/ gain at others' expense

【缩手缩脚】suō shǒu suō jiǎo

shrink with cold/ shrink from doing sth/ become irresolute and passive/ timid and flinching/ be over-cautious/ be handicapped/ timid

【缩头缩脑】suō tóu suō nǎo

be timid/ be fainthearted/ shrink from responsibility

【所向披靡】suǒ xiàng pī mǐ

mowing down all resistance/ wherever they went, the hostile army dispersed/ sweep away all obstacles/ ever triumphant/ carry all before one

【所向无敌】suǒ xiàng wú dī

break all enemy resistance/ sweep all before one/ he will never find his fellow/ invincible/ irresistible/ ever-victorious/ all-conquering

【索然寡味】suǒ rán guǎ wèi

flat and insipid

## T

【他山攻错】tā shān gōng cuò

stones from other hills may serve to polish the jade of this one—advice from others may help one

overcome one's shortcomings/ trust in the help of another to rectify oneself

【太公钓鱼, 愿者上钩】 tài gōng diào yú, yuàn zhě shàng gōu

like the fish rising to Jiang Tai Gong's hookless and baitless line — a willing victim letting himself be caught/ willingly fall into the snare/ willingly play into sb's hands

【太岁头上动土】 tài suì tóu shàng dòng tǔ

provoke sb far superior in power or strength

【泰阿倒持】 tài ē dào chí

hold the sword by the blade — surrender one's power to another at one's own peril

【泰然处之】 tài rán chǔ zhī

bear sth with equanimity/ take sth calmly/ not bat an eyelid/ take it easy

【泰然自若】 tài rán zì ruò

behave with perfect composure/ be self-possessed/ without turning an eyelash/ as cool as cucumber

【泰山北斗】 tài shān běi dòu

Mt. Tai and the Dipper, both are high and looked up to — said in praise of worthy men (or notables, etc.)

【泰山鸿毛】 tài shān hóng máo

a great mountain and a goose feather — comparison of extremes in weight

【泰山压顶】tài shān yā dǐng

bear down on one with the weight of Mount Taishan

【泰山压卵】tài shān yā luǎn

use Mt. Tai to crush an egg — when the extremely powerful crushing the extremely weak, the result is certain

【贪得无厌】tān dé wú yàn

be insatiably greedy (or avaricious)/ be greedy of (or for) gain/ insatiably covetous/ flay a flint/ rapacious/ avaricious

【贪贿无艺】tān huì wú yì

know no bounds in graft and bribery/ set oneself no bounds to graft and bribery/ have an itching palm

【贪生怕死】tān shēng pà sǐ

clinging to life instead of braving death/ care for nothing but saving one's skin/ be mortally afraid of death/ no more than coward

【贪天之功】tān tiān zhī gōng

covet the merits of Heaven as one's own/ appropriate to oneself the meritorious services of others/ credit other people's achievements to oneself/ have inordinate ambitions

【贪污腐化】tān wū fǔ huà

corruption and degeneration

【贪小失大】tān xiǎo shī dà

go for the small things and miss things that are

worthwhile/ covet a little and lose a lot/ penny wise  
and pound foolish

【贪赃枉法】tān zāng wǎng fǎ

graft and circumvent the law/ take bribes and bend  
the law/ pervert justice for a bribe

【昙花一现】tán huā yī xiàn

flower briefly as the broadleaved epiphyllum/ re-  
maining on the scene for only a brief period/ vanish  
as soon as it appears/ be a flash in the pan/ rare and  
brief appearance/ a nine days' wonder

【谈何容易】tán hé róng yì

easier said than done/ by no means easy

【谈虎色变】tán hǔ sè biàn

speaking of tigers makes one pale—nervous fears  
make things seem real/ turn pale at the mention of  
the tiger/ turn pale at the mere mention of sth terri-  
ble

【谈笑风生】tán xiào fēng shēng

talk (or make the conversation) in a gay manner/ a  
fascinating, lively talk (at party)/ talk cheerfully  
and humorously

【谈笑自若】tán xiào zì ruò

go on talking and laughing as if nothing had hap-  
pened/ be completely at ease/(of one) is his usual  
joking self/ undisturbed

【谈言微中】tán yán wēi zhōng

use an expression which hits the mark

【弹冠相庆】tán guān xiāng qīng

congratulate each other and dust off their old official's hats (in anticipation of fat jobs upon hearing of a mutual friend's appointment to a high post)/ congratulate each other on the prospect of getting good appointments/ preparing to start one's official life

【忐忑不安】tǎn tè bù ān

be in a fidget/ uneasy at heart/ vacillatingly uneasy

【叹为观止】tàn wéi guān zhǐ

acclaim (a work of art, etc.) as the acme of perfection

【探骊得珠】tàn lí dé zhū

under the black dragon's jaws one obtained a pearl—one's composition expounded the very essence of the theme/ writing which brings out important points from a mass of facts/ one grasped the point of the theme

【探囊取物】tàn náng qǔ wù

delve into pocket to fish out sth—an easy thing to do/ (as easy as) feeling for things in a bag/ (as easy as one would) take a thing out of his pocket

【探赜索隐】tàn zé suǒ yǐn

delve into secret facts or principles/ make a thorough investigation of hidden things

【堂堂正正】táng táng zhèng zhèng

impressive or dignified in personal appearance/ open and aboveboard

【堂堂之阵】táng táng zhī zhèn

an imposing array of troops/ awe-inspiring military strength

【糖衣炮弹】táng yī pào dàn

sugar-coated bullet

【螳臂当车】táng bì dāng chē

the mantis would try to stop a chariot<sup>n</sup> with its feelers—great rage and puny strength/ over-estimating its own strength, the “mantis trying to stop a cart”/ like the grasshopper (in the fable) which wanted to stop the chariot/ overate oneself and try to hold back an overwhelmingly superior force/ throw straws against the wind

【螳螂捕蝉，黄雀在后】táng láng bǔ chán, huáng què zài hòu

the mantis seizes the cicada, not knowing that the oriole is just behind it—warning against covetousness/ the mantis takes the cicada, but behind him lurks the oriole/ the mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind

【儗来之物】tǎng lái zhī wù

things that come unexpectedly/ an undeserved gain/ windfall



**【滔滔不绝】** tāo tāo bù jué

a flood of words/ a flow of conversation (or talk)/  
spout eloquent speeches/ speak unceasingly/ talk a  
horse's hind leg off/ talk nineteen to the dozen/ roll  
out/ most effusive

**【韬光养晦】** tāo guāng yǎng huì

hide one's capacities and bide one's time

**【逃之夭夭】** táo zhī yāo yāo

escaped and is nowhere to be found/ show (or take  
to) one's heels/ make one's getaway/ do a bolt/ de-  
camp

**【桃李满天下】** táo lǐ mǎn tiān xià

(of well-known teachers) have students everywhere  
(or all over the world)

**【讨好卖乖】** tāo hǎo mài guāi

ingratiate oneself with/ curry favour with/ fawn up-  
on/ toady to/ play the sycophant

**【讨价还价】** tāo jià huán jià

haggle over the price/ bargain/ higggle-haggle/ chaffer

**【特立独行】** tè lì dú xíng

act independently/ do not go with the current/ do not  
drift with the tide/ do not follow the crowd

**【腾蛟起凤】** téng jiāo qǐ fèng

mounting dragon and soaring phoenix—a rising man/  
great talents like mounting dragon and soaring  
phoenix

**【提纲挈领】** tí gāng qiè lǐng

take a net by the headrope or a coat by the collar—  
concentrate on the main points/ bring out the essen-  
tials/ bring up the chief points/ give main outline (of  
facts, principles)

**【提心吊胆】** tí xīn diào dǎn

breathless with fear/ in great terror/ trembling with  
fear/ in great suspense and agitation/ filled with anx-  
iety or fear/ have one's heart in one's mouth/ be on  
tenterhooks

**【啼饥号寒】** tí jī háo hán

cry from hunger and cold/ cry out (or lament) in  
hunger and cold

**【啼笑皆非】** tí xiào jiē fēi

not know whether to laugh or cry/ in an awkward  
position/ be very much embarrassed

**【醍醐灌顶】** tí hú guàn dǐng

pour the rich liquor on a man's head—increase one's  
wisdom/ be filled with wisdom/ be enlightened/ feel  
cool and comfortable as if being sprinkled with rich  
liquor/ suddenly feel refreshed

**【体面扫地】** tǐ miàn sǎo dì

completely lose face

**【体贴入微】** tǐ tiē rù wēi

look after with meticulous care/ care for with great  
solicitude/ be extremely considerate (or thoughtful)

【体无完肤】*tǐ wú wán fū*

have cuts and bruises all over the body/ be a mass of  
bruises/ be refuted down to the last point/ be  
smashed to (or into) smithereens

【天崩地坼】*tiān bēng dì chè*

nature is overthrown—dreadful calamities/ natural  
disasters like giant earthquakes and landslides/  
earth-shaking changes

【天不怕，地不怕】*tiān bù pà, dì bù pà*

fear neither Heaven nor Earth/ fear nothing at all/  
nothing daunted

【天长地久】*tiān cháng dì jiǔ*

as long as the heaven and earth endure/ enduring as  
(long as) the universe/ everlasting and unchanging

【天长日久】*tiān cháng rì jiǔ*

after a considerable period of time

【天高地厚】*tiān gāo dì hòu*

how high the sky and how deep the earth—immensity  
of the universe/ complexity of things/ (of kindness)  
profound/ deep

【天各一方】*tiān gè yī fāng*

(of a family or friends) live far apart from each other

【天公地道】*tiān gōng dì dào*

absolutely fair/ fair and reasonable

【天花乱坠】*tiān huā luàn zhuì*

as if it were raining flowers—give an extravagantly



colourful description/ in superlative terms/ laud sth to the skies/ elaborate in highflown phraseology/ talk sb's head off

【天昏地暗】tiān hūn dì àn

gloom above and darkness beneath/ a murky sky over a dark earth/ dark all round/ in a state of chaos and darkness

【天经地义】tiān jīng dì yì

unalterable principle—right and proper/universally accepted principle/perfectly justified/nature's law and earth's way/stand to reason/very reasonable indeed

【天罗地网】tiān luó dì wǎng

nets above and snares below/ spread a situation (or net) from which there is no escape/ an invisible net preventing all escape/ a gigantic (or an immense) net/ tight encirclement

【天马行空】tiān mǎ xíng kōng

a heavenly steed soaring across the skies—a powerful and unconstrained style

【天南地北】tiān nán dì běi

far apart/ far distant/ poles apart/ from different places or areas

【天怒人怨】tiān nù rén yuàn

the wrath of God and the resentment of men/ widespread indignation and discontent

【天壤之别】tiān rǎng zhī bié

as far apart as heaven and earth/ great difference as  
between heaven and earth/ poles apart/ worlds a-  
part/ a world of difference/

【天网恢恢,疏而不漏】 tiān wǎng huī huī, shū ér bù  
lòu

the net of Heaven has large meshes, but it lets noth-  
ing through/ the mills of God grind slowly, but they  
grind exceeding small/ justice has a long arm/ God's  
justice is inescapable

【天无绝人之路】 tiān wú jué rén zhī lù

Heaven never seals off all the exits—there is always a  
way out/ Heaven never cuts off a man's means

【天下太平】 tiān xià tài píng

all is quiet in the world/ all will be right with the  
world

【天下乌鸦一般黑】 tiān xià wū yā yī bān hēi

all crows are all equally black/ all crows under the  
sun are black/ crows are black the world over/ evil  
people are bad all over the world

【天下无敌】 tiān xià wú dī

all-conquering/ invincible

【天下无双】 tiān xià wú shuāng

unequaled in all the world

【天涯海角】 tiān yá hǎi jiǎo

the end of the sky and the corners of the sea—the re-  
motest corners of the earth/ the ends of the earth/

Ultima Thule/ the back of beyond

【天衣无缝】tiān yī wú fèng

a seamless heavenly robe—flawless/ divine garments  
without seams/ natural and perfect/ free from de-  
fect/ faultless

【天有不测风云】tiān yǒu bù cè fēng yún

a storm may arise from a clear sky/ there are unex-  
pected storms in nature/ sth unexpected may happen  
any time

【天灾人祸】tiān zāi rén huò

natural and man-made calamities

【天造地设】tiān zào dì shè

created by Heaven and put in place by Earth—created  
(or made) by nature/ heavenly

【天真烂漫】tiān zhēn làn màn

innocent and artless/ simple and unaffected/ child-  
ish/ naive

【天之骄子】tiān zhī jiāo zǐ

God's favoured one—an unusually lucky person

【天诛地灭】tiān zhū dì miè

be executed by heaven and destroyed by earth/ stand  
condemned by god/ may the gods strike (sb) down!/ may (sb) be destroyed by the gods!

【天字第一号】tiān zì dì yī hào

the world's number one/ the greatest in the world/

A-1

**【添油加醋】** tiān yóu jiā cù

add colour and emphasis to (a narration)/ add inflammatory details to (a story)

**【添枝加叶】** tiān zhī jiā yè

add a few branches and leaves—embellish a story

**【添砖加瓦】** tiān zhuān jiā wǎ

add bricks and tiles—do one's little bit

**【恬不知耻】** tián bù zhī chǐ

not feel ashamed at all/ past all sense of shame/ be impudent to the extreme/ be lost to shame/ be dead to shame/ have the effrontery to (do)/ blush like a black (or blue) dog/ shameless

**【甜言蜜语】** tián yán mì yǔ

sweet words and honeyed phrases/ fine-sounding words/ sugary (honeyed or candied) words/ soft sawder/ glib talk/ blarney/ cajolement/ honey-lipped/ smooth-tongued

**【挑肥拣瘦】** tiāo féi jiǎn shòu

pick the fat or choose the lean—choose whichever is to one's personal advantage/ difficult to please/ pick and choose/ fastidious

**【条分缕析】** tiáo fēn lǚ xī

make a careful and detailed analysis/ analyse point by point/ point by point exposition

**【调嘴学舌】** tiáo zuǐ xué shé

tell tales

**【挑拨离间】** tiào bō lí jiàn

provocation and estrangement/ foment disunity and dissent/ poison the relations between/ incite one against the other/ drive a wedge between/ sow discord among/ make bad blood between persons/ dissension-sowing

**【跳梁小丑】** tiào liáng xiǎo chǒu

a buffoon who performs antics/ contemptible scoundrel/ the clown

**【铁案如山】** tiě àn rú shān

borne out by ironclad evidence

**【铁面无私】** tiě miàn wú sī

unmoved by personal appeals, without fear or favor/ a man of integrity and justice/ impartial and incorruptible/ inflexibly just

**【铁石心肠】** tiě shí xīn cháng

have a heart of iron or stone—unmoved by feeling/ as hard as the nether millstone/ weep millstones/ marblehearted/ hardhearted/ ironhearted

**【铁树开花】** tiě shù kāi huā

the iron tree in blossom—something seldom seen or hardly possible/ the iron tree bursting into blossom

**【铁证如山】** tiě zhèng rú shān

the ironclad details pile up mountain high/ ironclad fact which one can never succeed in denying/ irrefutable, conclusive evidence/ irrefutable proof



**【听其言而观其行】** tīng qí yán ér guān qí xíng

listen to what a person says and watch what he does/  
judge people by their deeds not just by their words

**【听其自然】** tīng qí zì rán

let things take their own course/ let matters slide/  
let it have its swing/ let it be as it likes/ let the world  
wag (as it will)/leave (things) to chance

**【听天由命】** tīng tiān yóu mìng

submit to the will of Heaven/ resign (oneself) to  
one's fate/ trust to luck/ leave it to chance/ just as  
Heaven decrees/ happy-go-lucky

**【听之任之】** tīng zhī rèn zhī

let sth (undesirable, evil, etc.) go unchecked/ take a  
laissez faire attitude/ let one have one's own way/ let  
matters drift/ allow sth to continue

**【亭亭玉立】** tíng tíng yù lì

(of a woman) slim and graceful/ (of a tree, etc.) tall  
and erect/ gracile

**【停滞不前】** tíng zhì bù qián

reach (or come to) a stalemate/ be at (or come to) a  
standstill/ remain stagnant/ refuse to make  
progress/ mark time

**【挺身而出】** tīng shēn ér chū

step forth (or forward) bravely/ step out (or  
forward) courageously/ come forward courageously  
(or boldly)/ bolster oneself up

【铤而走险】tǐng ér zǒu xiǎn

become reckless in desperation, like an animal at bay/  
risk danger (when) in desperation/ make a reckless  
move/ rush headlong into danger/ take a risk/ neck  
or nothing

【通都大邑】tōng dū dà yì

large cities/ metropolis

【通风报信】tōng fēng bào xìn

divulge secret information

【通力合作】tōng lì hé zuò

make a united (or concerted) effort/ give full cooper-  
ation to

【通情达理】tōng qíng dá lǐ

show common (or good) sense/ be amenable (or ac-  
cessible) to reason/ stand to sense/ understanding  
and reasonable

【通权达变】tōng quán dá biàn

act as occasion requires/ adaptable to changing cir-  
cumstances/ adapt oneself to circumstances

【通宵达旦】tōng xiāo dá dàn

throughout the whole night until the dawn/ whole  
night until dawn/ all night till dawn/ all night long

【同病相怜】tóng bìng xiāng lián

those who have the same complaint sympathize with  
each other/ similarly afflicted people pity each oth-  
er/ fellow sufferers sympathize (or commiserate)

with one another (or with each other)/ adversity (misery or poverty) makes strange bedfellows

【同仇敌忾】tóng chóu dí kài

share a bitter hatred of the enemy/ treat one as a common enemy

【同床异梦】tóng chuáng yì mèng

share the same bed but dream different dreams—be strange bedfellows/ engage in the same business but each has his own calculations/ (of persons) thrown together but each having a different problem (or ambition)

【同恶相求】tóng è xiāng qiú

aid and abet each other in wrong doings/ evil-doers collude (collaborate or gang up) with each other

【同甘共苦】tóng gān gòng kǔ

share joys and sorrows (weal and woe, comforts and hardships, prosperity and adversity or good luck and ill)/ for better or for worse/ (fellow fighters, etc.) through thick and thin/ through fair or foul

【同归于尽】tóng guī yú jìn

be exterminated at one and the same time/ (all) perish together/ end in common ruin/ both sides go to ruin

【同流合污】tóng liú hé wū

wallow in the mire with sb/ associate (oneself) with an evil person (or an undesirable element)/ join in sb's evil-doings (or cesspool)/ play a part in sb's evil

actions/ go with the evil stream

【同声相应,同气相求】tóng shēng xiāng yīng, tóng qì xiāng qiú

similar sounds echo one another, and the same odours merge together—people of an inclination fall into the same group/ like attracts like

【同室操戈】tóng shì cāo gē

family members drawing swords on each other—internal strife/ internecine feud (fight or warfare)/ fight against one's own men/ quarrels between brothers

【同心同德】tóng xīn tóng dé

be dedicated heart and soul to the same cause/ with one heart and one mind

【同心协力】tóng xīn xié lì

work in full cooperation and with unity of purpose/ work together with one heart/ unite in a concerted effort/ be of one mind/ pull together/ gung-ho

【同舟共济】tóng zhōu gòng jì

people in the same boat help each other/ pull together to tide over difficulties/ share with one in trouble/ sail on the same tack/ in fair weather or in foul

【铜筋铁骨】tóng jīn tiě gǔ

a brass and iron constitution—a strong man

【铜墙铁壁】tóng qiáng tiě bì

wall of iron and brass—impregnable fortress/ wall of bronze/ a bastion of iron

【童山濯濯】tóng shān zhuó zhuó

a bare hill (or mountain)

【统筹兼顾】tǒng chóu jiān gù

unified planning with due consideration for all concerned/ make overall plans and take all factors into consideration/ overall planning and all-round considerations/ overall consideration

【痛定思痛】tòng dīng sī tòng

recall past pains/ recall a painful experience/ take one's painful experience to heart/ draw a lesson from a bitter experience

【痛改前非】tòng gǎi qián fēi

sincerely mend one's ways/ thoroughly rectify one's errors/ a thorough repent of one's former sins/ earnestly reform one's misdeeds/ reform with a keen sense of errors

【痛哭流涕】tòng kū liú tì

cry and shed bitter tears/ cry one's heart out/ cry (or weep) bitterly/ wail

【痛心疾首】tòng xīn jí shǒu

resent or hate deeply/ with bitter hatred

【痛心切齿】tòng xīn qiè chǐ

gnash the teeth with anger/ make one burn with anger

【痛痒相关】tòng yǎng xiāng guān

care for one another's comfort and happiness/share

a common lot

【偷工减料】tōu gōng jiǎn liào

cheat in work and cut down material/ use inferior materials and turn out sub-standard goods/ do shoddy work and use inferior materials/ scamp work and stint material/ cheat on government contract(s)/ jerry-build

【偷鸡不着蚀把米】tōu jī bù zháo shí bǎ mǐ

try to steal a chicken only to end up losing the rice/ go for wool and come back shorn

【偷鸡摸狗】tōu jī mō gǒu

crooked dealings/ pilfer

【偷梁换柱】tōu liáng huàn zhù

steal the beam and pillars and replace them with rotten timbers—perpetrate a fraud/ try by underhand means to/ resort to fraudulence

【偷天换日】tōu tiān huàn rì

steal the sky and put up a sham sun—perpetrate a gigantic fraud/ substitute the fake for the genuine/ audacious scheme of cheating people/ in an underhand attempt/ play a sly trick

【偷偷摸摸】tōu tōu mō mō

furtively/ surreptitiously/ covertly

【头角峥嵘】tóu jiǎo zhēng róng

brilliance (of a young person)/ outstanding talent/ very promising

【头面人物】tóu miàn rén wù

prominent figure/ big shot/ bigwig

【头破血流】tóu pò xuè liú

be badly battered/ knock one's head against a brick wall/ run into bumps and bruises/ break one's neck

【头痛医头,脚痛医脚】tóu tòng yī tóu, jiǎo tòng yī jiǎo

treat the head when the head aches, treat the foot when the foot hurts—treat symptoms but not the disease/ (take only) palliative measures for one's illness/ a defensive stop-gap measure/ sporadic and piecemeal steps

【头头是道】tóu tóu shì dào

clear and logical/ closely reasoned and well argued/ appear impressive/ everything clear and straight-forward/ methodical

【头重脚轻】tóu zhòng jiǎo qīng

top-heavy

【投笔从戎】tóu bǐ cóng róng

throw aside the writing brush and join the army—renounce the pen for the sword/ give up literature for a military career

【投鞭断流】tóu biān duàn liú

if the soldiers throw their whips into the river, it would be sufficient to stem the flow—speaking of one's numerous forces

【投机倒把】tóu jī dǎo bǎ

engage in speculation and profiteering

【投机取巧】tóu jī qǔ qiǎo

seize every chance to gain advantage by trickery/ take advantage of the moment/ gain sth by trickery/ be opportunistic

【投其所好】tóu qí suǒ hào

agree to whatever another is pleased with/ every one to his taste/ hit on what one likes

【投鼠忌器】tóu shǔ jì qì

hesitate to pelt a rat for fear of smashing the dishes beside it/ spare the rat to save the dishes—hold back from taking action against an evildoer for fear of involving good people/ burn not your house to rid it of the mouse

【投桃报李】tóu táo bào lǐ

get a peach and send a plum—return present for present/ exchange gifts

【突飞猛进】tū fēi měng jìn

advance by leaps and bounds/advance at seven-league strides/make giant strides/advance swiftly and vigorously/make a spurt of progress/swift advance

【突然袭击】tū rán xí jī

surprise attack

【突如其来】tū rú qí lái

arrive unexpectedly/ arise suddenly/ come all of a



sudden

【图穷匕见】tú qióng bǐ xiàn

when the map was unrolled to the end, a dagger was revealed—the real intention is revealed in the end/  
the dagger is out after pretended friendship

【荼毒生灵】tú dú shēng líng

plunge the people into the depths of suffering/ cruelly injure (or slaughter) the people

【涂脂抹粉】tú zhī mǒ fěn

apply powder and paint (or rouge and powder)/ prettify/ whitewash

【徒劳无功】tú láo wú gōng

work to no avail/ make a futile effort/ vain efforts/  
plough (or sow) the sands/ flog a dead horse

【屠门大嚼】tú mén dà jué

stand before a butcher's and masticate vigorously—of one who ardently desiring the unattainable seek to solace himself in this manner

【土崩瓦解】tǔ bēng wǎ jiě

disturbances of the earth and collapse of the tiles—a collapse without resistance/ collapse like a house of cards/ crumble and perish (or disintegrate)/ fall apart

【土豪劣绅】tǔ háo liè shēn

local tyrants and evil gentry

【土生土长】tǔ shēng tǔ zhǎng

locally born and bred/ born and brought up on one's native soil

【土洋结合】tǔ yáng jié hé

combine indigenous and foreign methods/ combine traditional and modern methods

【吐故纳新】tǔ gù nà xīn

exhaling the old and inhaling the new—metabolism/ get rid of the stale and take in the fresh

【兔死狗烹】tù sǐ gǒu pēng

the hounds are killed for food once all the hares are bagged—trusted aides are eliminated when they have outlived their usefulness/ slay the lackeys when they have outlived their usefulness

【兔死狐悲】tù sǐ hú bēi

when the hare dies the fox is sad—sympathy with one of its kind/ the fox mourns over the death of the hare/ like mourns over the death of like

【兔子不吃窝边草】tù zi bù chī wō biān cǎo

a rabbit doesn't eat the grass near its hole (so that it will be protected)—a villain doesn't harm his nextdoor neighbours

【兔子尾巴长不了】tù zi wěi bā cháng bù liǎo

the tail of a rabbit can't be long—won't last long

【推本溯源】tuī běn sù yuán

trace (or investigate) the origin/ ascertain the causes

【推波助澜】tuī bō zhù lán

make a stormy sea stormier/add fuel to the fire/ fan the fire

【推陈出新】tuī chén chū xīn

weed through the old to bring forth the new/ weed out the old to let the new emerge/ discard what has outlived its time and develop the new/ develop the new through critical assimilation of the old/ the new emerging out of the old

【推己及人】tuī jǐ jí rén

place yourself in another's place—do unto others what you would do unto yourself/ consider others in one's own place

【推襟送抱】tuī jīn sòng bào

deal with sb in good faith/ treat sb with sincerity

【推三阻四】tuī sān zǔ sì

decline with all sorts of excuses/ give the runaround

【推贤让能】tuī xián ràng néng

select the worthy and give place to the able/ select the capable men and put them in power.

【推心置腹】tuī xīn zhì fù

place one's heart in the body of another man—loyal friendship/ show the greatest consideration or confidence (treat sb as oneself)/ repose full confidence in sb/ confide in sb/ the flow of soul

【退避三舍】tuì bì sān shè

retreat ninety *li*—give way to sb to avoid a conflict/

avoid sb like a plague/ withdraw from sb/ keep a good distance from

【蛻化变质】tuì huà biàn zhì

degenerate/ degeneration

【吞吞吐吐】tūn tūn tǔ tǔ

speak a word, swallow the next/ hesitate in speaking/ (speak) in a halting way/ mince matters (or words)/ mutter and mumble/ prunes and prism/ hem and haw/ stumble

【吞云吐雾】tūn yún tǔ wù

“swallowing clouds and breathing out mists”—said of smoking opium

【囤积居奇】tún jī jū qí

hoarding and cornering (speculating or profiteering)/ corner (hold or engross) the market/ be on the long side of the market

【拖泥带水】tuō ní dài shuǐ

dragged through mud and water—muddled, as a style of writing or acting/ diffuse, irrelevant talk, not clear-cut/ bedrabbled/ messy/ sloppy/ slovenly

【脱缰之马】tuō jiāng zhī mǎ

a runaway horse—uncontrollable/ uncontrollable as a wild horse without bridle

【脱口而出】tuō kǒu ér chū

say sth unwittingly/ words escape from one's lips/ speak by impulse or without forethought/ let slip/

blurt out/ one's tongue runs before one's wit/ jerk out words

【脱胎换骨】tuō tāi huàn gǔ

be reborn/ cast off one's old self/ create new things out of the old/ make a thoroughgoing change/ thoroughly remould oneself/ turn over a new leaf

【脱颖而出】tuō yǐng ér chū

the point of an awl sticking out through a bag—talent showing itself/ become eminent/ come out in the open

【唾手可得】tuò shǒu kě dé

extremely easy to obtain/ with extreme ease

## W

【挖空心思】wā kōng xīn sī

rack (or cudgel) one's brains for/ think hard

【瓦釜雷鸣】wǎ fǔ léi míng

an earthen pot sounding like thunder—an unworthy man in a high position/ earthen pots making a lot of noise instead of the classical bells—said of bombastic politicians in power while good men are out

【歪风邪气】wāi fēng xié qì

evil winds and noxious influence/ unhealthy trends and evil practices/ perverse (or evil) trends/ gust of

evil wind

【外强中干】wài qiáng zhōng gān

outwardly flourishing, inwardly dried up/ be outwardly strong but inwardly weak/ strong in appearance but weak in reality/ be strong without but feeble within/ be fierce of visage and faint of heart/ appearantly rich and successful, but actually in financial trouble

【剗肉补疮】wān ròu bǔ chuāng

cut out a piece of one's flesh to cure a boil—resort to a remedy worse than the ailment/ a makeshift to tide over a present difficulty/ rob one's belly to cover one's back

【纨袴子弟】wán kù zǐ dì

fellows with white silken breeches—fops/ profligate son of the rich/ playboy/ dandy

【完璧归赵】wán bì guī zhào

return the jade intact to the State of Zhao—return sth to its owner in good condition/ return a thing whole to its owner

【完美无缺】wán měi wú quē

be flawless and perfect/ leave nothing to be desired/ as good as gold/ faultless

【玩火自焚】wán huǒ zì fén

whoever plays with fire gets burnt/ he who plays with fire will get burned/ play with fire and perish by it/ get burnt by playing with fire

【玩世不恭】wán shì bù gōng

take cynical attitude towards life/be cynical/ a hippy

【玩物丧志】wán wù sàng zhì

riding a hobby saps one's will to make progress/ excessive attention to trivia saps the will/ play through life and have no serious ambition/ sap one's aspiration by seeking pleasure

【顽石点头】wán shí diǎn tóu

(be so persuasive as to make) the insensate stones nod in agreement

【万般皆下品，唯有读书高】wàn bān jiē xià pǐn, wéi yǒu dú shū gāo

only the learned rank high, all other trades are low/ all occupations are base, only book-learning is exalted

【万变不离其宗】wàn biàn bù lí qí zōng

change ten thousand times without departing from the original aim or stand/ no matter how many changes he has made, he has not departed from his line/ in none of his changes has he departed from his stand/ the central theme remains the same

【万古长存】wàn gǔ cháng cún

last forever/ be everlasting

【万古长青】wàn gǔ cháng qīng

be forever green/be evergreen/ eternally new/ ever new/ flourish forever/ remain fresh forever/ be

everlasting

【万古流芳】 wàn gǔ liú fāng

will be remembered throughout the ages/ leave a good name to posterity/ have a niche in the temple of fame

【万古千秋】 wàn gǔ qiān qiū

throughout the ages/ forever

【万家灯火】 wàn jiā dēng huǒ

a myriad twinkling lights (of a city)

【万劫不复】 wàn jié bù fù

beyond redemption/ doomed eternally

【万籁俱寂】 wàn lài jù jì

all sounds of nature stopped—complete silence of the night/ in the dead of the night/ all sounds are hushed (or still)/ all is quiet/ silence reigns everywhere/ silence reigns supreme

【万里长征】 wàn lǐ cháng zhēng

a long march of ten thousand *li*

【万马奔腾】 wàn mǎ bēn téng

ten thousand horses galloping ahead (or forward)—going full steam ahead

【万马齐喑】 wàn mǎ qí yīn

ten thousand horses standing mute

【万目睽睽】 wàn mù kuí kuí

all eyes centered on (sth)/ all eyes are fixed on (sb or sth)



【万人空巷】wàn rén kōng xiàng

the whole town turns out (to welcome sb or celebrate some event)

【万事大吉】wàn shì dà jí

everything is just fine/ all is well and propitious/ everything goes off without a hitch/ everything is in order/ everything opportune/ everything propitious (or auspicious)/ time and tide are favourable/ with (the sun of) fortune smiling

【万事亨通】wàn shì hēng tōng

everything runs smoothly/ everything goes well/ sail before (or with) the wind

【万事俱备, 只欠东风】wàn shì jù bèi, zhǐ qiàn dōng fēng

everything is ready, and all that we need is an east wind—all is ready except what is crucial

【万寿无疆】wàn shòu wú jiāng

(wish sb) a long life

【万水千山】wàn shuǐ qiān shān

ten thousand crags and torrents—the trails of a long journey

【万死一生】wàn sǐ yī shēng

only one chance in ten thousand of preserving the life

【万无一失】wàn wú yī shī

absolutely sure, no possibility of failure/ cannot fail

under any circumstances/ not a chance of an error/  
no risk at all/ perfectly safe

【万象更新】wàn xiàng gēng xīn

everything is fresh again/ everything looks fresh and  
gay

【万应灵丹】wàn yīng líng dān

panacea/ cure-all

【万众一心】wàn zhòng yī xīn

millions of people all of one mind/ millions united as  
one/ all united in one purpose/ all of one heart/ with  
one heart and one mind

【万紫千红】wàn zǐ qiān hóng

innumerable flowers of purple and red/ a riot (blaze-  
or profusion) of colour

【亡命之徒】wáng mìng zhī tú

refugees from justice/ desperado/ ruffian/ badman/  
fugitive

【亡羊补牢】wáng yáng bǔ láo

mend the fold after a sheep is lost

【亡羊补牢，犹未为晚】wáng yáng bǔ láo, yóu wèi wéi  
wǎn

it is not too late to mend the fold even after some of  
the sheep have been lost

【亡羊得牛】wáng yáng dé niú

lose a sheep and get an ox—the gain is greater than  
the loss

**【网开一面】** wǎng kāi yī miàn

leave one side of the net open—give the wrongdoer a way out/ a net open on one side—purposely give the offenders a chance to turn over a new leaf

**【枉费心机】** wǎng fèi xīn jī

have had all one's pains for nothing/ wreck one's brains without results/ rack one's brains in vain/ waste one's efforts/ fruitless efforts/ go on a wild goose chase

**【往返徒劳】** wǎng fǎn tú láo

run back and forth in vain

**【惘然若失】** wǎng rán ruò shī

disconcertedly feel lost/ wear a blank look/ be all adrift

**【妄自菲薄】** wàng zì fěi bó

improperly belittle oneself/ unduly humble oneself/ think lightly of oneself/ undervalue oneself/ underestimate one's own capabilities/ underestimate one's achievements/ inferiority complex

**【妄自尊大】** wàng zì zūn dà

have too high an opinion of oneself/ be arrogant and overweening/ be puffed up with pride/ be puffed out with self-importance/ be well wadded with conceit/ think no small beer of oneself

**【忘恩负义】** wàng ēn fù yì

devoid of all gratitude/ be ungrateful/ turn on one's

friend/ bite the hand that feeds one/ kick down (or over) the ladder/ ingratitude

【忘乎所以】wàng hū suǒ yǐ

forget oneself in a moment of excitement/ forget oneself in one's elation/ lose all bearings in moment of pride and satisfaction

【望尘莫及】wàng chén mò jí

see the dust raised by a person but be unable to overtake him—hopelessly behindhand/ so far behind that one can only see the dust of the rider ahead/ too far behind to catch up/ too inferior to bear comparison/ fall far behind/ cannot catch up with

【望而却步】wàng ér què bù

shrink back at the sight of (sth dangerous or difficult)/ flinch

【望而生畏】wàng ér shēng wèi

be terrified (or awed) by the sight of sb or sth/ inspire awe even from distance/ awe-inspiring

【望风而逃】wàng fēng ér táo

flee at the mere sight of the oncoming force/ run away at rumor of approach

【望风披靡】wàng fēng pī mǐ

(of an army) flee at sight/ flee pell-mell (or helter-skelter)

【望梅止渴】wàng méi zhǐ kě

gaze (or look) at plums to quench one's thirst—vain

W

hope/ quench one's thirst by thinking of plums—  
imagined satisfaction/ feed on fancies

【望文生义】wàng wén shēng yì

take the words too literally/ interpret without real  
understanding

【望眼欲穿】wàng yǎn yù chuān

bore through with both eyes by gazing—of a long-ex-  
pectant attitude/ anxiously gaze till one's eyes are  
strained/ have long been looking forward with eager  
expectancy/ look for with impatient expectancy/ ex-  
pect to see sb who never comes

【望洋兴叹】wàng yáng xīng tàn

lament one's littleness before the vast ocean—bemoan  
one's inadequacy in the face of a great task/ gaze at  
the ocean and complain of its infinitude/ view with  
despair the vast ocean or vast work to be done

【危机四伏】wēi jī sì fú

beset with crises/ be threatened by growing crises/  
crisis-ridden

【危如累卵】wēi rú lěi luǎn

as dangerous as a pile of eggs—extremely risky/ pre-  
carious like a stack of eggs/ hazardous as eggs piled  
up/ in a precarious situation/ be in jeopardy

【危言耸听】wēi yán sǒng tīng

say frightening things just to raise an alarm/exag-  
gerate things just to scare people/shocking statement

attracts attention/ make an inflammatory statement/  
alarmist/sensational

【危在旦夕】wēi zài dàn xī

the danger lies between morning and evening—death  
is imminent/ on the verge of death (or destruction)/  
in imminent danger/ at death's door

【威风凛凛】wēi fēng lǐn lǐn

awe-inspiring appearance/ dignified manners/ with  
great dignity/ awful air/ majestic-looking

【威迫利诱】wēi pò lì yòu

combine threats with inducements (or blandish-  
ments)/ alternate intimidation and bribery/ coercion  
and coaxing/ big stick and carrot

【威武不屈】wēi wǔ bù qū

will not submit to force/ not to be subdued by force/  
not bow to pressure/ firm and unyielding

【威信扫地】wēi xìn sǎo dì

with every shred of one's prestige swept away—com-  
pletely discredited/ one's reputation is dragged in the  
dust/ prestige completely swept into the dust

【微不足道】wēi bù zú dào

trivial matters hardly worthy of mention/ so small  
that it is not worth noticing/ not worth mentioning/  
knee-high to a mosquito/ cut no figure/ negligible/  
insignificant/ inconsiderable/ paltry

【微乎其微】wēi hū qí wēi

very little/ next to nothing

【微言大义】wēi yán dà yì

subtle and profound language/ sublime words with deep meaning

【巍然屹立】wēi rán yì lì

stand (or rise) majestically (like a mountain)/ stand lofty and firm/ stand rock-firm/ stand as firm as a rock

【为非作歹】wéi fēi zuò dǎi

do evil (wrong or mischief)/ carry on misdeeds/ engage in lawlessness/ commit crimes/ perpetrate outrages/ break the law

【为富不仁】wéi fù bù rén

be rich and cruel/ be one of the heartless (or unscrupulous) rich

【为期不远】wéi qī bù yuǎn

the day is not far off

【为所欲为】wéi suǒ yù wéi

do whatever one likes/ do as one pleases/ have (or get) one's own way/ have (or take) one's full swing/ act wilfully

【违法乱纪】wéi fǎ luàn jì

violate the law and discipline/ break (or infringe) laws and violate discipline/ offences against (breach of, violation of or in contravention of) law and discipline

【围城打援】wéi chéng dǎ yuán

besiege a city to annihilate the enemy relief force/ besiege the enemy in order to strike at his reinforcements

【围魏救赵】wéi wèi jiù zhào

“besiege Wei to rescue Zhao”—relieve the besieged by besieging the base of the besiegers/ relieving the state of Zhao by besieging the state of Wei

【唯利是图】wéi lì shì tú

be bent solely on profit/ be intent on nothing but profit/ work exclusively for profit/ put profit-making first/ be interested only in personal gain/ try to turn everything to one's own advantage/ with the profit motive paramount/ profit-grabbing

【唯命是听】wéi mìng shì tīng

always do as one is told/ be absolutely obedient/ be at sb's beck and call/ be guided entirely by the orders of (sb)/ be led by the ears/ be under sb's thumb/ be moulded like wax/ be at sb's disposal

【唯我独尊】wéi wǒ dú zūn

supremacy over all/ terribly self-conceited/ extremely conceited/ assume air of self-importance/ overlordship/ overweening

【惟妙惟肖】wéi miào wéi xiào

(of painting, portrayal) strikingly (or remarkably) true to life (or nature)/ absolutely lifelike/ be the



very image of

【尾大不掉】wěi dà bù diào

the tail is too big to wag—of encumbrances, such as dependencies which become too much for the parent State/ leadership rendered ineffectual by recalcitrant subordinates/ (of an organization) too cumbersome to be effective/ subordinate growing too powerful/ the tail wagging the dog

【委曲求全】wěi qū qiú quán

stoop in order to accomplish something/ compromise out of consideration for the general interest/ stoop to compromise/ save the situation by some concessions/ suffer wrong for the sake of general interest/ make concessions to achieve one's purpose/ be quite accommodating and care for over-all interests/ in a spirit of conciliation and compromise

【娓娓动听】wěi wěi dòng tīng

speak with absorbing interest/ be pleasing to the ear/ smooth-spoken

【娓娓而谈】wěi wěi ér tán

talk familiarly on and on/ talk volubly

【萎靡不振】wěi mǐ bù zhèn

in low spirits/ dejected and apathetic/ dejection and laxity/ feel (or look) blue/ milk-and-water/ dispirited/ downcast

【唯唯诺诺】wěi wěi nuò nuò

say "yes", "yes" repeatedly/ be a yes-man/ with servility/be obsequious/ servile

【为丛驱雀】wèi cóng qū què

drive the birds (or sparrows) into the woods (or thickets) — drive one's friends to the side of the enemy

【为虎傅翼】wèi hǔ fù yì

give wings to a tiger — increase the power of a tyrant to do evil/ lend support to an evildoer like adding wings to a tiger/ assist an evildoer.

【为虎作伥】wèi hǔ zuò chāng

play the jackal to the tiger/ act as guide to tiger (or as the paws of the tiger)/ act as a helper to an evil person/ help a villain do evil/ assist the evildoer/ serve as the enemy's jackal/ hold a candle to the devil

【为民请命】wèi mǐn qǐng mìng

plead in the name of the people/ plead for the life of the people/ plead for the people

【为人作嫁】wèi rén zuò jià

labour in the interests of another in order to make a living — from the idea of a girl working on the bridal finery of another/ sewing sb else's trousseau — doing work for others with no benefit to oneself/ make wedding dress for others — a woman's lament of being bridesmaid and never a bride/ slave for other people/ act on others' behalf.

【为渊驱鱼】wèi yuān qū yú

drive the fish into deep waters/ drive one's friends to the side of the enemy

【未卜先知】wèi bǔ xiān zhī  
have foresight/ foretell/ foresee

【未可厚非】wèi kě hòu fēi  
do not censure (person or act) too much/ be not altogether inexcusable/ give no cause for much criticism

【未老先衰】wèi lǎo xiān shuāi  
prematurely senile/ old before one's age (or time)/ decrepit before old age

【未能免俗】wèi néng miǎn sú  
be unable to rise above the conventions/ cannot but follow conventional practice/ have to follow the customs

【未雨绸缪】wèi yǔ chóu móu  
provide against (or for) a rainy day/ save (or lay up) against a rainy day/ provide against the future/ take precautions/ don't have thy cloak to make when it begins to rain/ cast an anchor to windward

【味同嚼蜡】wèi tóng jiáo là  
it is like chewing wax—insipid/ tasteless like chewing a candle/ it tastes no better than tallow

【畏首畏尾】wèi shǒu wèi wěi  
fear both the beginning and the end—excessive fear/ be full of misgivings/ be overcautious/ be filled with

misgivings and fear/ be frightened all over

【畏缩不前】wèi suō bù qián

hesitate to press forward/ hang back (in face of danger)/ recoil in fear/ flinch from

【蔚然成风】wèi rán chéng fēng

this practice has grown into a general trend/ become a common practice/ become the order of the day/ come into vogue

【蔚为大观】wèi wéi dà guān

present a splendid sight/ afford a magnificent view/ make an impressive sight/ be a sight to behold (or to see)

【温故而知新】wēn gù ér zhī xīn

review the old and learn the new/ gain new insights through restudying old material/ reviewing the past helps one to understand the present/ learn the new by restudying the old/ review what you have learned and know what is new

【温情脉脉】wēn qíng mò mò

full of tender feeling/ too softhearted

【温文尔雅】wēn wén ěr yǎ

cultured and refined in manners/ gentle and cultivated

【文不对题】wén bù duì tí

irrelevant to the subject/ get off the subject/ beside the point/ go off on a tangent/ wide of the mark

【文不加点】wén bù jiā diǎn



never blot a line in writing—have a facile pen/ write well, fast and without need of revision/ the writing is faultless

【文从字顺】wén cóng zì shùn

(of writing) clear and idiomatic/ readable and fluent

【文房四宝】wén fáng sì bǎo

the four treasures of the study (writing brush, ink stick, ink slab and paper)—stationery requisites

【文过饰非】wén guò shì fēi

cover up one's errors by excuses/ gloss over one's fault/ conceal faults and gloss over wrongs/ explain away one's errors/ paper over one's errors/ disguise evil conduct/ slur over and excuse one's crimes

【文人相轻】wén rén xiāng qīng

writers like to disparage one another/ scholars tend to scorn each other

【文如其人】wén rú qí rén

the writing mirrors the writer/ the style is the man/ like author, like book

【文恬武嬉】wén tián wǔ xī

(of a corrupt regime) the civil officials are indolent and the military officers frivolous

【文武双全】wén wǔ shuāng quán

be well versed in both polite letters and martial arts/ a man versed in both literature and military affairs/ a man endowed with civil and military virtues/ be

adept with both the pen and the sword

【文质彬彬】wén zhì bīn bīn

elegance and solidity equally combined/balance of outward grace and solid worth/be elegant and gentle/be so gentle and refined/with elegant manners/gentle

【闻风而起】wén fēng ér qǐ

immediately respond to a call/ go into action without delay/ take action as soon as one hears

【闻风丧胆】wén fēng sàng dǎn

lose courage when one hears/ become terror-stricken (panic-stricken or terrified) at the news

【闻过则喜】wén guò zé xǐ

feel happy when told of one's errors/ be glad to have one's errors pointed out/ glad when told of one's own errors/ thankful for being told of one's errors

【闻名不如见面】wén míng bù rú jiàn miàn

know a man by repute is not as good as meeting him face to face/ knowing a person by repute is not as good as seeing him in the flesh

【闻所未闻】wén suǒ wèi wén

hear that one has never heard before/ never even heard of/ never heard of such a thing before/ it lacks creation/ unheard-of

【闻一知十】wén yī zhī shí

"hear one thing and know ten others"—intelligent/infer the whole matter after hearing but one point/

quick-witted/ smart

【刎颈之交】wěn jǐng zhī jiāo

a friendship that would lead persons to die for each other/ bosom friends who are willing to die for one another/ friends sworn to death/ sworn friends

【稳操左券】wěn cāo zuǒ quàn

have full assurance of success

【稳扎稳打】wěn zhā wěn dǎ

go ahead steadily and strike sure blows/wage steady and sure struggle/go about things steadily and surely

【问长问短】wèn cháng wèn duǎn

take the trouble to make detailed inquiries

【问道于盲】wèn dào yú máng

ask a blind man the way—seek advice from an ignorant person/ask the way from a blind man—seek advice from one who can offer none/blind leading the blind

【问寒问暖】wèn hán wèn nuǎn

ask after sb's health with deep concern/ be solicitous for sb's welfare

【问心无愧】wèn xīn wú kuì

have a clear conscience/ feel no qualms upon self-examination/ peace of conscience

【问心有愧】wèn xīn yǒu kuì

feel a twinge of conscience/ have a guilty conscience

【瓮中之鳖】wèng zhōng zhī biē

a turtle in the jar—bottled up/ (like) a rat in a hole/

inescapable situation/ a sitting duck/ trapped

【瓮中捉鳖】wèng zhōng zhuō biē

catch a turtle in the jar—a sure catch/ catch a rat in the hole/ go after an easy prey

【我行我素】wǒ xíng wǒ sù

persist in one's old way (no matter what others say)/ stick to one's old way of doing things

【沃野千里】wò yě qiān lǐ

a vast expanse of fertile land

【卧薪尝胆】wò xīn cháng dǎn

sleep on brushwood and taste gall—undergo self-imposed hardships so as to strengthen one's resolve to wipe out a national humiliation/ lie on faggots and taste gall—nurse vengeance/ endure hardships to accomplish some ambition/ in determination for revenge

【握手言欢】wò shǒu yán huān

shake hands and make up

【乌合之众】wū hé zhī zhòng

a motley force that knows no discipline/ an undisciplined mob/ a disorderly band/ a motley crowd/ sheep without a shepherd/ the ragtag and bobtail/ tagrag/ rout/ mob/ rabble

【乌七八糟】wū qī bā zāo

in a horrible mess/ in great disorder/ (turn things) upside down/ filthy

【乌烟瘴气】wū yān zhàng qì





a foul atmosphere/ a pestilential atmosphere/ befoul  
the atmosphere/ pandemonium

【污泥浊水】wū ní zhuó shuǐ

filthy mire/ filth and mire/ the mire

【呜呼哀哉】wū hū āi zāi

alas!alack!/ alas, it is sad indeed!/ lament the cause  
as lost/ dead and gone/ all is lost

【无病呻吟】wú bìng shēn yīn

moan and groan without being ill/ groaning when not  
really in pain/ pain without cause/ make a fuss about  
an imaginary illness/ make a fuss about nothing/  
adopt a sentimental pose/ baseless anxiety

【无耻之尤】wú chǐ zhī yóu

brazen in the extreme/ the height of shamelessness/  
most shameless of all

【无出其右】wú chū qí yòu

nothing superior to it/ second to none/ matchless/  
unequalled/ unexcelled

【无敌于天下】wú dī yú tiān xià

unmatched anywhere in the world/ invincible/  
matchless/ peerless

【无的放矢】wú dì fàng shī

shoot an arrow without a target/ shoot at random (or  
at nonexistent target)/ random shooting/ let fly at  
nothing/ discharge one's pistol in the air

【无地自容】wú dì zì róng

no place for one—not a leg to stand on/ find nowhere  
(or no place) to hide oneself for shame/ feel too  
ashamed to show one's face/ look for a hole to crawl  
into

【无动于衷】wú dòng yú zhōng

call forth no response in one's breast/ aloof and indif-  
ferent/ with nonchalance/ without compunction/ be  
dead (or lost) to all feeling/ be hardened to/ un-  
touched/ unmoved/ unconcerned

【无独有偶】wú dú yǒu ǒu

it is not unique, but has its counterpart/ not come  
singly but in pairs

【无恶不作】wú è bù zuò

stop at nothing in doing evil/ stop at no evil/ do ev-  
ery imaginable evil/ commit all manner of crimes/  
commit all kinds of atrocities/ be as wicked as pos-  
sible/ one's evil doings know no limits

【无法无天】wú fǎ wú tiān

defy laws human and divine/ become absolutely law-  
less/ run riot/ run wild and stir up trouble/ one's  
madness knows no bounds/ devil-may-care/ licen-  
tious/ lawless

【无风不起浪】wú fēng bù qǐ làng

there are no waves without wind/ there's no smoke  
without fire

【无风起浪】wú fēng qǐ làng

waves rising without any breeze—baseless slanders/  
make trouble out of nothing

【无根无蒂】wú gēn wú dì

without foundation or support

【无功受禄】wú gōng shòu lù

get a reward without deserving it

【无关大局】wú guān dà jú

of no great importance/ of little account/ a side is-  
sue/ not matter very much

【无关宏旨】wú guān hóng zhǐ

a matter of no consequence/ be of no consequence (or  
significance)/ be of no consideration/ inessential/ in-  
significant

【无关痛痒】wú guān tòng yǎng

(of comments) without any bite/(of remarks) irrele-  
vant or pointless/ be completely indifferent to/ irrel-  
evant

【无稽之谈】wú jī zhī tán

baseless gossip/unfounded (or fantastic) talk (or state-  
ments)/ pack of nonsense/ a cook-and-bull story/ a  
fishy story/ a latrine rumour/ a tale of a tub/ fiction

【无计可施】wú jì kě shī

without any plan which might be used/ utterly with-  
out resources/ at one's wits' end/ at the end of one's  
tether

【无济于事】wú jì yú shì

of no help to the matter/ of no avail/ to no effect/ a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff/ unhelpful/ useless

【无价之宝】wú jià zhī bǎo

priceless treasure/ invaluable asset/ above (beyond or without) price

【无坚不摧】wú jiān bù cuī

capable of destroying any stronghold/ overrun all fortifications/ carry all before one/ be all-conquering/ invincible

【无精打采】wú jīng dǎ cǎi

dispirited and discouraged/ be in low spirits/ with one's spirit quenched/ be in (get or have) the blues/ out of heart (spirits, sorts or humour)/ feel slack/ listless/ dejected/ lackadaisical

【无拘无束】wú jiū wú shù

free and easy/ unconstrained/ unrestrained

【无可比拟】wú kě bǐ nǐ

beyond (past or without) compare/ matchless/ incomparable/ unparalleled

【无可非议】wú kě fēi yì

(be) without rebuke/ above (or beyond) reproach/ above criticism/ unobjectionable/ blameless/ unimpeachable

【无可厚非】wú kě hòu fēi

give no cause for much criticism/ not inexcusable

【无可讳言】wú kě huì yán

there is no hiding the fact/ undeniable

【无可奈何】wú kě nài hé

there is no help for it/ have no alternative/ have no way out/ be reluctant to/ against one's will/ willy-nilly/ helpless

【无可无不可】wú kě wú bù kě

not care one way or another/ without any preconceived ideas/ indecisive/ uncertain

【无可争辩】wú kě zhēng biàn

beyond (all) question/ beyond (or without) controversy/ beyond dispute/ indisputable/ irrefutable/ incontrovertible/ incontestable/ undeniable

【无可置疑】wú kě zhì yí

out of doubt/ without (beyond or no) doubt/ undoubted/ indubitable/ unquestionable

【无孔不入】wú kǒng bù rù

there is no opening into which he does not enter—of one who is skilful in intrigue/ always trying to penetrate in (or into)/ enter into every opening/ poke into every nook and corner/ seize every opportunity/ always have an eye on the main chance/ have a finger in every pie/ lose no chance/ no opportunity overlooked/ all-pervasive

【无理取闹】wú lǐ qǔ nào

make trouble out of nothing/ make trouble ground-

lessly (or wilfully)/ refuse to listen to reason/ be deliberately provocative/ utter nonsense and make trouble/ unreasonable altercation/ frivolous quibbling/ unreasonable quarrelling/ mischief-making

【无论如何】wú lùn rú hé

at any rate/ at all events/ in any case/ whatever happens/ at all costs/ for all the world/ come what may/ sink or swim

【无米之炊】wú mǐ zhī chuī

cook a meal without rice—lacking the necessary materials one cannot accomplish one's intentions/ make bricks without straw

【无名小卒】wú míng xiǎo zú

a nobody/ a cipher/ nonentity

【无名英雄】wú míng yīng xióng

an unknown hero

【无能为力】wú néng wéi lì

incapable of action/ cannot do anything to help/ powerless/ helpless

【无穷无尽】wú qióng wú jìn

infinite/ endless/ boundless/ inexhaustible/ unfailing

【无伤大雅】wú shāng dà yǎ

involving no major principle/ not affect the whole/ not hurt the important essentials/ not matter much/ unimportant defects

【无声无臭】wú shēng wú xiù

neither sound nor smell—of a person who is unknown to fame and without notoriety/ of no reputation/ unknown/ obscure

【无事不登三宝殿】wú shì bù dēng sān bǎo diàn

no one comes to the Hall of the Trinity without a reason/ never go to the temple for nothing/ would not go to sb's place except on business, for help, etc. / I wouldn't come to you if I hadn't something to ask of you

【无事生非】wú shì shēng fēi

make trouble out of nothing/ create problems where none exists/ make uncalled-for trouble/ be deliberately provocative

【无所不包】wú suǒ bù bāo

leave nothing unincluded/ all-embracing/ all-encompassing

【无所不能】wú suǒ bù néng

almighty/ omnipotent .

【无所不为】wú suǒ bù wéi

there is nothing which he does not do—in the way of evil/ stop at nothing/ do all manner of evil/ go all lengths

【无所不用其极】wú suǒ bù yòng qí jí

resort to every conceivable means/ resort to extreme measures/ employ the meanest of tricks/ use every trick up one's sleeve/ go to every extreme/ stop at

nothing/ leave no stone unturned/ go to any length

【无所不在】wú suǒ bù zài

omnipresent/ ubiquitous

【无所不知】wú suǒ bù zhī

omniscient

【无所不至】wú suǒ bù zhì

penetrate everywhere/ spare no pains (to do evil)/ be capable of anything/ in every possible way/ by every possible means

【无所措手足】wú suǒ cuò shǒu zú

do not know how to move hand and foot—not knowing what to do/ be at a loss as to what to do

【无所顾忌】wú suǒ gù jì

without scruple/ hesitate at no act/ go all lengths/ unscrupulously

【无所适从】wú suǒ shì cóng

with no definite plan to follow/not know what course to take/be at a loss as to what to do/be at sea

【无所事事】wú suǒ shì shì

be occupied with nothing/ have nothing to do/ idle away one's time/ idle about (or along)/ be at an idle end/ idlesse

【无所畏惧】wú suǒ wèi jù

utterly without fear/ fearless/ dauntless/ undaunted

【无所用心】wú suǒ yòng xīn

not give serious thought to anything/ have an empty



head

【无所作为】wú suǒ zuò wéi

attempt nothing and accomplish nothing/ be in a state of inertia

【无往不利】wú wǎng bù lì

go smoothly everywhere/ be ever successful/ all water runs to one's mill

【无往不胜】wú wǎng bù shèng

carry all before one/ invincible/ ever-victorious

【无妄之灾】wú wàng zhī zāi

unexpected (or accidental) misfortune (or calamity)/ undeserved ill turn

【无微不至】wú wēi bù zhì

never came short in the smallest details/ without any detail not taken care of/ lavish every care on/ in every possible way/ (attention, influence) reaches every-where/ to the last atom/ meticulously

【无隙可乘】wú xì kě chéng

no crack to get in by/ no openings (or loophole) to exploit/ no weakness to take advantage of/ leave no room for

【无懈可击】wú xiè kě jī

with no chink in one's armour/ find no flaw (or chance) for attack/ beyond criticism/ unassailable/ unimpeachable/ invulnerable/ flawless/ (of comments) watertight

【无依无靠】wú yī wú kào

have no one to depend on/ helpless

【无以复加】wú yǐ fù jiā

in the extreme

【无影无踪】wú yǐng wú zōng

disappeared without a shadow/ disappear completely/ vanish without a trace/ not a trace left/ vanish into thin air/ fly (or go) to the winds/ clean gone

【无庸讳言】wú yōng huì yán

no need for reticence/ be frank

【无庸赘述】wú yōng zhuì shù

it's unnecessary to go into details

【无忧无虑】wú yōu wú lǜ

free from care/ carefree

【无与伦比】wú yǔ lún bǐ

beyond challenge/ beyond (or without) compare (or comparison)/ past comparison/ lick all creation/ without equal/ incomparable/ unparalleled/ unique

【无缘无故】wú yuán wú gù

without any reason/ without cause or reason/ without rhyme or reason/ for no reason at all

【无源之水, 无本之木】wú yuán zhī shuǐ, wú běn zhī mù

water without a source and a tree without roots

【无中生有】wú zhōng shēng yǒu

create sth out of nothing—trumped up/ turn nothing into sth/ sheer fabrication/ a figment of the imagination/ purely fictitious/ manufacture out of thin air/ fabricated

【无足挂齿】wú zú guà chǐ

not worth mentioning/ don't mention it

【无足轻重】wú zú qīng zhòng

of little importance (or consequence)/ a matter of no consequence/ be of no account (or consequence)/ count for little (or nothing)/ carry no weight/ not fit to be considered/ kick the beam/ nonsignificant/ footy

【五彩缤纷】wǔ cǎi bīn fēn

a riot of colour/ an assemblage of colours/ be riot with colours/ blazing with colour/ in amazing colours/ the play of colours/ all the colours of the rainbow/ multi-coloured/ colourful

【五方杂处】wǔ fāng zá chǔ

(city where) peoples from all regions congregate

【五谷丰登】wǔ gǔ fēng dēng

an abundant harvest of all grains (or of all food crops)/ a bumper grain harvest

【五光十色】wǔ guāng shí sè

bright with many colours/ gay with variegated colours/ all sorts of colours/ a great variety of colours/ resplendent with variegated colouration/ of all kinds/ varicoloured/ multicoloured/ motley

**【五湖四海】** wǔ hú sì hǎi

the five lakes and the four seas—everywhere/ all the seas and lakes everywhere/ (from) all corners of the country

**【五花八门】** wǔ huā bā mén

of a wide (or rich) variety/ many and manifold/ a motley variety of/ all kinds of/ kaleidoscopic/ miscellaneous/ variegated/ manifold/ multifarious

**【五日京兆】** wǔ rì jīng zhào

an official who doesn't expect to remain long in office

**【五十步笑百步】** wǔ shí bù xiào bǎi bù

one who retreats fifty paces mocks one who retreats a hundred—the pot calls the kettle black

**【五体投地】** wǔ tǐ tóu dì

the five members fall prostrate in obeisance—the hands, the knees and the head touching the ground/ complete prostration/ prostrate oneself in admiration before/ kneel at the feet of/ on all fours before

**【五颜六色】** wǔ yán liù sè

of various colours/ multicoloured/ colourful

**【舞文弄墨】** wǔ wén nòng mò

pervert the law by playing with legal phraseology/ engage in phrase-mongering/ indulge in fancy writing/ play on words

**【勿谓言之不预也】** wù wèi yán zhī bù yù yě

don't say that I didn't warn you/ do not blame us

for not having forewarned you/ don't say that you have not been forewarned/ let no one say he has not been warned

【物腐虫生】wù fǔ chóng shēng

worms breed in decaying matter/ worms invest decayed matter

【物换星移】wù huàn xīng yí

things change and the stars move—change of the seasons/ things or aspects of things have changed

【物极必反】wù jí bì fǎn

when a thing reaches its limit, it begins to return/ things will develop in the opposite direction when they become extreme/ things always revert (or reverse) themselves after reaching an extreme/ a thing turns into its opposite if pushed too far/ things which have reached their extremes turn into their opposites

【物尽其用】wù jìn qí yòng

make the best use of everything/ let all things serve their proper purpose

【物以类聚】wù yǐ lèi jù

things of one kind come together/ birds of a feather flock together/ like attracts (or draws to) like

【误人子弟】wù rén zǐ dì

harm the younger generation/ lead young people astray

【误入歧途】wù rù qí tú

go astray/ be misled

X



【息事宁人】xī shì níng rén

a policy of compromise to let everybody have peace/  
patch up a quarrel and reconcile the parties con-  
cerned/ make concessions to avoid trouble/ gloss  
things over to stay on good terms/ pour (or throw)  
oil on (troubled) waters

【息息相关】xī xī xiāng guān

be linked with each other closely/ be closely bound  
up/ vitally interrelated

【惜墨如金】xī mò rú jīn

as careful of his ink as if it were gold—said of one  
who would not write too readily/ (of a writer, callig-  
rapher, painter) abstemious in his use of ink

【惜指失掌】xī zhǐ shī zhǎng

care for the fingers and lose the hand—lose much in  
being careful of little/ stint a finger only to lose the  
whole hand—try to save a little only to lose a lot

【稀里糊涂】xī lǐ hú tú

not knowing what one is about/ muddleheaded

【稀稀拉拉】xī xī lā lā

thinly scattered/ sparse

**【熙熙攘攘】** xī xī rǎng rǎng

hustle and bustle about/ bustling with activity/ with people bustling about/ coming and going in crowds

**【嘻嘻哈哈】** xī xī hā hā

laughing and joking/ laughing merrily/ mirthful

**【嬉皮笑脸】** xī pí xiào liǎn

grinning cheekily/ smiling and grimacing

**【习非成是】** xí fēi chéng shì

accept what is wrong as right as one grows accustomed/ through usage the erroneous becomes the correct

**【习惯成自然】** xí guàn chéng zì rán

once you form a habit, it comes natural to you/ what is habitually done becomes natural/ habit makes things natural/ habit (or custom) is a second nature/ once a use, forever a custom

**【习焉不察】** xí yān bù chá

too accustomed to sth to call it in question

**【习以为常】** xí yǐ wéi cháng

become (or get) accustomed to/ be used to

**【习与性成】** xí yǔ xìng chéng

habit becomes one's second nature

**【席不暇暖】** xí bù xiá nuǎn

not sit long enough to warm the mat (seat)—said of a busy man/ be in a tearing hurry/ be constantly on the go

**【洗耳恭听】** xǐ ěr gōng tīng

cleanse the ears and listen reverently/ listen with respectful attention/ prick up one's ears/ be all ears  
hang on sb's lips

【洗心革面】xǐ xīn gé miàn

change one's heart and reform/ make a thorough reformation/ reform oneself thoroughly/ turn over a new leaf

【喜出望外】xǐ chū wàng wài

be overjoyed (at an unexpected gain, good news, etc.)/ joy beyond all expectations/ in pleased surprise/ be overcome with joy

【喜从天降】xǐ cóng tiān jiàng

happiness comes from Heaven—a sudden unexpected happy event

【喜怒无常】xǐ nù wú cháng

subject to changing moods

【喜气洋洋】xǐ qì yāng yāng

full of joy/ ebullition of joy/ jubilant

【喜闻乐见】xǐ wén lè jiàn

love to see and hear

【喜笑颜开】xǐ xiào yán kāi

light up with pleasure/ be wreathed in smiles/ beaming with smiles/ beam with joy/ be all smiles

【喜新厌旧】xǐ xīn yàn jiù

love (or please with) the new and loathe the old—be fickle in affection



**【喜形于色】** xǐ xíng yú sè

a happy expression on one's face/ happiness written on one's face/ light up with pleasure/ be visibly pleased

**【细水长流】** xì shuǐ cháng liú

a small but a steady stream—small but steady income/ plan on a long-term basis/ economize to avoid running short/ go about sth little by little without a letup

**【细针密缕】** xì zhēn mì lǚ

fine needle and closely wrought threads/ in fine, close stitches/(work)in a meticulous way

**【细微末节】** xì wēi mò jié

minor details (or problems)/ side issues/ nonessentials

**【虾兵蟹将】** xiā bīng xiè jiàng

shrimp soldiers and crab generals—ineffective troops

**【瞎子点灯白费蜡】** xiā zi diǎn dēng bái fèi là

like lighting a lamp for a blind man—absolutely useless/like a blind man carrying a candle—a sheer waste

**【瞎子见钱眼睛开】** xiā zi jiàn qián yǎn jīng kāi

on seeing money, even a blind man would have his eyes wide open

**【瞎子摸鱼】** xiā zi mō yú

a blind man groping for fish—act blindly

**【狭路相逢】** xiá lù xiāng féng

they meet in a narrow path—where they could not avoid each other/ (of adversaries) meet face to face

on a narrow path—come into unavoidable confrontation/inevitable revenge/ be squeezed into evershrinking domain

【遐迩闻名】xiá ěr wén míng

be well-known far and near/ nejoy widespread renown/ everybody far and near knows it

【瑕不掩瑜】xiá bù yǎn yú

one flaw cannot obscure the splendour of the jade—the defects cannot obscure the virtues/ the flaws do not detract from the jade's essential beauty—blemishes do not detract man's greatness

【瑕瑜互见】xiá yú hù jiàn

there are both good and bad qualities/ see what is perfect and what is not/ have defects as well as merits/ have both strong and weak points

【下笔千言，离题万里】xià bǐ qiān yán. lí tí wàn lǐ

a thousand words from the pen in a stream, but ten thousand *li* away from the theme—write quickly but stray from the theme

【下不为例】xià bù wéi lì

not to be taken as a precedent/ not to be repeated

【下车伊始】xià chē yī shǐ

the moment one alights from the official carriage—the moment one takes up one's official post/ as soon as one alights from the official carriage—on arrival at a new post

【下里巴人】xià lǐ bā rén

Song of the Rustic Poor (a folk song of the state of Chu)—popular literature or art

【下马看花】xià mǎ kàn huā

dismount to view the flowers/ get off one's horse and look at the flowers/ on-the-spot investigation

【先睹为快】xiān dǔ wéi kuài

consider it a pleasure to be among the first to read (a poem, article, etc.)

【先发制人】xiān fā zhì rén

gain the initiative (or gain the mastery) by striking first/ forestall the enemy/ get (or have) the start of sb/ take the wind out of sb's sails/ catch the ball before the bound/ steal a march on sb/ he who makes the first start rules others/ the launcher has the advantage/ strike first/ preemptive

【先见之明】xiān jiàn zhī míng

the ability to discern what is coming/ able to predict (or anticipate)/ have a long head/ be far-sighted/ prophetic vision/ prescient/ foresight/ far-seeing/ provident

【先礼后兵】xiān lǐ hòu bīng

be a gentleman first and a soldier second/ first a courteous exchange of words, then war/ take strong measures only after courteous ones fail/ try peaceful (or fair) means before resorting to force

**【先入为主】** xiān rù wéi zhǔ

first impressions are strongest/ first impressions are firmly entrenched/ the first speaker has the advantage to instil certain notions/ preconceived ideas keep a strong hold/ formulate preconceived ideas/ be prejudiced

**【先入之见】** xiān rù zhī jiàn

a preconceived idea (or notion)/ prejudice/ preconception

**【先声夺人】** xiān shēng duó rén

forestall one's opponent by a show of strength/ overawe others by displaying one's strength

**【先天不足】** xiān tiān bù zú

be congenitally deficient/ suffer from an inherent shortage/ an inadequate natural endowment/ inherent shortage of

**【先天下之忧而忧,后天下之乐而乐】** xiān tiān xià zhī yōu ér yōu, hòu tiān xià zhī lè ér lè

a leader should plan and worry ahead of the people, and enjoy the fruits after the people/ be concerned about affairs of state before others, enjoy comfort after others/ the first to show concern and the last to enjoy himself

**【先务之急】** xiān wù zhī jí

business requiring immediate attention/ a matter of great urgency/ pressing (or urgent) task to be fulfilled

first/ first things first

【先下手为强】xiān xià shǒu wéi qiáng

whoever strikes the first blow has the advantage/ he who strikes first gains the advantage/ to take the initiative is to gain the upper hand/ the early bird gets the worm

【先斩后奏】xiān zhǎn hòu zòu

execute the criminal first and report to the emperor afterwards—act first and report afterwards/ (ancient general) empowered to kill first then report later

【先知先觉】xiān zhī xiān jué

person of foresight and vision/ having foresight/ prophet

【闲情逸致】xián qíng yì zhì

leisurely and carefree mood/ leisure and mood for enjoyments/ romantic or poetic fancy/ mood for relaxation

【弦外之音】xián wài zhī yīn

the meaning between the lines/overtones/implication

【显而易见】xiǎn ér yì jiàn

it is crystal clear that/ clearly show/ obvious/ evidently/ clearly

【现身说法】xiàn shēn shuō fǎ

advise sb or explain sth by using one's own experience as an example/ take oneself as an example

【陷身囹圄】xiàn shēn líng yǔ

be thrown into prison/ be sent (or taken) to prison/  
be put in prison

【献计献策】xiàn jì xiàn cè

offer advice/ make suggestions/ suggest ways and  
means for...

【相安无事】xiāng ān wú shì

live in peace with each other/ live together peacefully

【相得益彰】xiāng dé yì zhāng

each shining more brilliantly in the other's company/  
bring out the best in each other/ complement each  
other/ each improves by association with the other/  
benefit by association together

【相反相成】xiāng fǎn xiāng chéng

(things that) oppose each other and yet also comple-  
ment each other/ things opposed to and complement-  
ing each other/ both opposite and complementary to  
each other

【相辅相成】xiāng fǔ xiāng chéng

complement each other/ supplement each other

【相敬如宾】xiāng jìng rú bīn

(of couple) treat each other with respect ("like  
guests") / never fail in mutual respect (and atten-  
tions)

【相去无几】xiāng qù wú jǐ

not much difference between (the two)

【相生相克】xiāng shēng xiāng kè

mutual promotion and restraint between the five ele-  
ments (a concept held by the ancients to explain



natural phenomena and later used in traditional Chinese medicine, etc.)

**【相提并论】** xiāng tí bìng lùn

mention in the same breath/ put sth on a par with/ regard in same category

**【相形见绌】** xiāng xíng jiàn chù

prove definitely inferior/ pale by comparison/ be inferior by comparison/ seem pallid by comparison/ appear deficient in comparison/ compare unfavourably with/ be pale before (beside or by the side of)/ be casted (put or thrown) into the shade/ be outshone/ overshadowed

**【相沿成习】** xiāng yán chéng xí

become a custom through long usage

**【相依为命】** xiāng yī wéi mìng

depend on each other for existence (or survival)/ be bound by a common destiny/ share one's life together

**【相映成趣】** xiāng yìng chéng qù

form a delightful contrast/ contrast finely with each other/ gain by contrast/ set each other off

**【相知有素】** xiāng zhī yǒu sù

have known each other long

**【降龙伏虎】** xiáng lóng fú hǔ

subdue the dragon and tame the tiger—overcome powerful adversaries

**【响彻云霄】** xiǎng chè yún xiāo

resound (or reverberate) through the skies/ echoing to the skies/ the air resounded with

【响遏行云】xiǎng è xíng yún

(of singing) be so sonorous it stops the passing clouds

【想方设法】xiǎng fāng shè fǎ

try every means/ do everything possible/ try by hook or by crook

【想入非非】xiǎng rù fēi fēi

allow the fancy to run wild/ give play to one's imagination/ indulge in fantasy/ indulge in dreams of/ wishful thinking/ far-fetched imagination/ much given to speculation/ have a maggot in one's head (or brain)/ a flight of fancy (or of imagination)/ have one's head full of bees/ one's wits are (gone) wool-gathering/ be (or have one's head) in the clouds

【向壁虚造】xiàng bì xū zào

make up out of one's head/ create groundless rumors/ fabricate

【向隅而泣】xiàng yú ér qì

weep in a corner and bewail one's sad fate/ weep all alone in a corner/ be left to grieve in the cold/ grieve out in the cold

【相机行事】xiàng jī xíng shì

act as the occasion demands/ do as one sees fit/ watch for the proper moment for action/ act when the time is opportune/ act at opportune time



## 【项背相望】xiàng bèi xiāng wàng

look in both directions/ a huge jostling crowd (“neck to back”)/ (walk) one after another in close succession

## 【项庄舞剑，意在沛公】xiàng zhuāng wǔ jiàn, yì zài pèi gōng

Xiang Zhuang performed the sword dance as a cover for his attempt on Liu Bang's life—act with a hidden motive

## 【象齿焚身】xiàng chǐ fén shēn

an elephant is killed because of its ivory—warning against hoarding wealth/ the elephant is destroyed for the sake of its tusks

## 【象煞有介事】xiàng shà yǒu jiè shì

make a great show of being in earnest/ pretend to be serious (about doing sth)/ pull a sanctimonious face/ with affected (or seeming) seriousness/ in all apparent seriousness/ with great fanfare/ in a matter-of-fact manner

## 【梟首示众】xiāo shǒu shì zhòng

cut off a person's head and hang it up as a warning to all

## 【枵腹从公】xiāo fù cóng gōng

attend to official duties on an empty stomach/ serve others without salary

## 【逍遥法外】xiāo yáo fǎ wài

go scot-free/ be (or remain) at large/ (be) on the

loose/ get away with murder

【逍遥自在】xiāo yáo zì zài

enjoying freedom, calm and master of oneself/ free and unrestrained/ be in a state of blissful abstraction/ be in a state of enjoyment/ be at peace with the world and oneself/ be at ease

【萧规曹随】xiāo guī cáo suí

Cao (a Han Dynasty prime minister) followed the rules set by Xiao (his predecessor)—follow established rules

【销声匿迹】xiāo shēng nì jī

keep silent and lie low/ disappear from the scene/ draw in one's horns

【小不忍则乱大谋】xiǎo bù rěn zé luàn dà móu

lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans/ who cannot take small insults or setbacks is liable to spoil big plans

【小丑跳梁】xiǎo chǒu tiào liáng

a contemptible wretch making trouble

【小恩小惠】xiǎo ēn xiǎo huì

petty (or small) favours/ economic sops (or bait)

【小家碧玉】xiǎo jiā bì yù

a pretty girl from a humble home

【小巧玲珑】xiǎo qiǎo líng lóng

small and exquisite

【小试锋芒】xiǎo shì fēng máng

display only a small part of one's talent

【小手小脚】xiǎo shǒu xiǎo jiǎo

lacking boldness/ timid/ niggling/ stingy/ mean

【小题大作】xiǎo tí dà zuò

make a great trouble out of a trifling matter/ get into (or raise) a great fuss about trifles/ make a fuss about (or over) a trifling matter/ make much ado about nothing/ make a mountain out of a molehill/ make a long harvest about (or for) a little corn/ a storm in a teacup

【小巫见大巫】xiǎo wū jiàn dà wū

like a small sorcerer in the presence of a great one—feel dwarfed/ pale into insignificance by comparison/ the moon is not seen where the sun shines

【小心翼翼】xiǎo xīn yì yì

with sedulous care/ with great care/ be much cautious of/ watch one's steps/ pick one's steps/ walk on (or upon) egg shells

【孝子贤孙】xiào zǐ xián sūn

filial (or worthy) progeny of/ true (or worthy) sons of/ filial offspring/ dutiful sons of

【效命疆场】xiào mìng jiāng chǎng

ready to lay down one's life on the battlefield

【笑里藏刀】xiào lǐ cáng dāo

hide a dagger in a smile—with murderous intent behind one's smiles/ a murderous heart under a

smiling exterior/ velvet paws hide sharp claws/  
treachery lying underneath a mask of friendliness/ an  
iron hand in a velvet glove

【笑容可掬】xiào róng kě jū

a face beaming with smiles/ be radiant with smiles/  
with a charming smile

【笑容满面】xiào róng mǎn miàn

grin from ear to ear/ be all smiles

【笑逐颜开】xiào zhú yán kāi

beam with smiles (or joy)/ be covered with smiles/  
be wreathed in smiles

【邪魔外道】xié mó wài dào

crooked ways (or means)/ dishonest practices (or  
methods)

【胁肩谄笑】xié jiān chǎn xiào

cringe and smile obsequiously/ play the sycophant

【卸磨杀驴】xiè mò shā lú

kill the donkey the moment it leaves the millstone—  
get rid of sb as soon as he has done his job/ kill the  
donkey as soon as it is taken from the millstone/  
slaughter the donkey after it has done its job at the  
mill

【邂逅相遇】xiè hòu xiāng yù

meet (a relative, friend, etc.) unexpectedly/ meet  
by chance

【谢天谢地】xiè tiān xiè dì

thank godness/ thank heaven (an exclamation)

【心安理得】xīn ān lǐ dé

feel at ease and justified/ one's conscience is void of offence/ have an easy conscience

【心不正焉】xīn bù zhèng yān

the mind running on other things/ in an absent sort of way/ absent-minded/ with an air of abstraction/ inattentive

【心潮澎湃】xīn cháo péng pài

feel an upsurge of emotion/ be at the highest pitch of excitement/ be full of excitement

【心慈手软】xīn cí shǒu ruǎn

softhearted

【心胆俱裂】xīn dǎn jù liè

be frightened out of one's wits (or life)/ shake in one's shoes/ thunder-struck

【心烦意乱】xīn fán yì luàn

be terribly upset/ annoyed and perplexed/ restless and disquieted/ confused and worried/ distracted

【心服口服】xīn fú kǒu fú

be sincerely convinced/ fully convinced

【心腹之患】xīn fù zhī huàn

disease in one's vital organs—serious hidden trouble or danger/ enemy within/ danger of betrayal or revolt from those closest/ one's greatest trouble at home

**【心甘情愿】** xīn gān qíng yuàn

heartily willing/ perfectly willing/ be most willing to/ be perfectly happy to/ willingly and gladly/ be content to/ content oneself with/ with a good grace/ of one's own free will

**【心广体胖】** xīn guǎng tǐ pàng

a liberal mind and a well-nourished body/ carefree and contented/ fit and happy

**【心狠手辣】** xīn hěn shǒu là

cruel and evil/ wicked and merciless

**【心花怒放】** xīn huā nù fàng

one's heart bursts into bloom/ burst with joy/ mad with joy/ be wild with joy/ be greatly elated (or excited)/ cheer (delight or gladden) the cockles of one's heart

**【心怀不满】** xīn huái bù mǎn

feel (or be) discontented with (sb or sth)/ harbour resentment in one's bosom/ nurse a grievance/ have a grudge against/ maliciously/ resentfully

**【心怀鬼胎】** xīn huái guǐ tāi

entertain dark schemes/ harbour evil (or sinister) designs/ have ulterior motives/ with misgivings in one's heart/ conceive mischief/ scheme to do evil

**【心慌意乱】** xīn huāng yì luàn

be alarmed and nervous/ mentally confused/ fall into a flutter/ all in a flutter (or fluster)

**【心灰意懒】** xīn huī yì lǎn

be utterly despondent/ be disheartened/ be downhearted/ very much discouraged/ lose heart

**【心急如焚】** xīn jí rú fén

burning with impatience / impatient with great anxiety/ worried to death

**【心惊胆战】** xīn jīng dǎn zhàn

palpitating with fear or anxiety/ shake with fright/ tremble with fear/ with one's heart going Pit-a-Pat/ have one's heart in one's mouth/ be deeply alarmed/ panic-stricken

**【心惊肉跳】** xīn jīng ròu tiào

a feeling of great fear or nervousness/ palpitate with anxiety and fear/ be filled with apprehension/ shudder (or tremble) with fear/ jumpy with fear/ quivering with fright/ one's heart leaped into one's mouth/ make one's flesh creep

**【心口如一】** xīn kǒu rú yī

what one says is indeed what one thinks/ say what one thinks/ faithful to one's words/ speak the mind/ be frank and unreserved/ plain spoken

**【心旷神怡】** xīn kuàng shén yí

free of mind and happy of heart/ completely relaxed and happy/ carefree and joyous

**【心劳日拙】** xīn láo rì zhuō

fare worse and worse for all one's scheming/ get

nothing for all one's pains/ go on a wild goose chase

【心力交瘁】xīn lì jiāo cuì

be mentally and physically exhausted/ worn out with work

【心灵手快】xīn líng shǒu kuài

clever in mind and quick of action

【心灵手巧】xīn líng shǒu qiǎo

clever and deft

【心领神会】xīn lǐng shén huì

understand tacitly/ readily take a hint/ appreciate

【心乱如麻】xīn luàn rú má

have one's mind as confused as a tangled skein/ mind confused like entangled hemp/ be utterly confused and disconcerted/ be terribly upset/ be in a stew/ lose one's balance

【心满意足】xīn mǎn yì zú

be perfectly satisfied (or content)/ fully satisfied/ rest satisfied/ to one's heart's content

【心明眼亮】xīn míng yǎn liàng

see and think clearly/ be sharp-eyed and clear-headed

【心平气和】xīn píng qì hé

be in a calm mood/ even-tempered and good-humoured/ in one's sober senses/ in a composed manner/ with equanimity/ calm and poised

【心情舒畅】xīn qíng shū chàng

have ease of mind/ be in a good mood



**【心如刀割】** xīn rú dāo gē

feel as if a knife were piercing one's heart/ feel greatly distressed/ unbearable heart-break/ be pierced with grief/ extremely painful/ the iron entered into one's heart

**【心神不定】** xīn shén bù dìng

the mind wonders/ have no peace of mind/ feel uneasy or perturbed/ feel restless/ in a state of discomposure/ wondering in thought/ be ill at ease/ be distracted/ a restless mind/ a changeable spirit/ agitated

**【心无二用】** xīn wú èr yòng

one cannot keep one's mind on two things at the same time/ one should concentrate on one's work

**【心心相印】** xīn xīn xiāng yìn

have mutual affinity/ be kindred spirits/ mutually attached to each other/ see eye to eye with/ share the feeling of/ hearts of two are like one/ mind acts upon mind/ in perfect harmony with/ whole-hearted response

**【心绪不宁】** xīn xù bù níng

in a disturbed state of mind/ in a flutter

**【心血来潮】** xīn xuè lái cháo

be prompted by a sudden impulse/ be seized by a whim/ suddenly to think of a thing/ a sudden inspiration

【心有灵犀一点通】xīn yǒu líng xī yī diǎn tōng

hearts which have a common beat are linked

【心有余而力不足】xīn yǒu yú ér lì bù zú

the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak/ more than willing but lacking the power to/ unable to do what one wants very much to do

【心有余悸】xīn yǒu yú jì

one's heart still fluttering with fear/have a lingering fear/ with unforgotten trepidation

【心猿意马】xīn yuán yì mǎ

the intents of the mind and heart are like the horse and ape—very difficult to bring under control/ prone to outside attractions (temptations)/ in a restless and jumpy mood/ restless and whimsical/ fanciful and fickle/ unsettled (or fickle) in mind/ wavering in purpose

【心悦诚服】xīn yuè chéng fú

feel a heartfelt admiration/ be completely convinced/ submit or be convinced gladly/ submit willingly/ gladly and wholeheartedly

【心照不宣】xīn zhào bù xuān

have a tacit understanding/ no need to say how grateful one is/ not necessary to say more/ tacit

【心直口快】xīn zhí kǒu kuài

saying what one thinks without much deliberation/ quick in speech, but straight at heart/ openhearted and outspoken/plainspoken and straightforward/

wear one's heart on one's sleeve/ honest-to-goodness

【心中有数】xīn zhōng yǒu shù

have a pretty good idea of/ know fairly well/ know how things stand/ know what's what/ know one's own mind

【辛辛苦苦】xīn xīn kǔ kǔ

take a lot of trouble/ take great pains/ work laboriously

【欣喜若狂】xīn xǐ ruò kuáng

be mad with joy/ leap with joy/ go wild with joy/ be as happy (or joyful) as a lark/ exult

【欣欣向荣】xīn xīn xiàng róng

growing (or blooming) prosperity/ springing up vigorously/full of life and vigor/ a lively (or an invigorating) atmosphere/ on the upgrade/ thriving/ flourishing/ prosperous

【新陈代谢】xīn chén dài xiè

the process of metabolism/ the transition from the old order of things to the new/ assimilation of the new and excretion of the old/ the supersession of the old by the new/ metabolism

【新仇旧恨】xīn chóu jiù hèn

all the old and recent grudge/ new hatred piled on old/ old scores and new

【新官上任三把火】xīn guān shàng rèn sān bǎ huǒ

a new broom sweeps clean

【馨香祷祝】xīn xiāng dǎo zhù

burn incense and pray to the gods/ earnestly pray for sth/ sincerely wish

【寻死觅活】xún sǐ mì huó

try to commit suicide in order to give a scare (or intimidation)/ repeatedly attempt suicide (in order to threaten)

【信步闲游】xìn bù xián yóu

roam about without definitive objective ("where the foot takes one")—walk aimlessly/ take a leisurely walk

【信而有征】xìn ér yǒu zhēng

borne out by evidence

【信口雌黄】xìn kǒu cí huáng

criticize or make statements freely without careful thought/ make deceitful statements or unfounded charges/ make irresponsible remarks/ wag one's tongue too freely/ sheer nonsense

【信口开河】xìn kǒu kāi hé

say whatever comes to one's mind, without proper consideration/ talk irresponsibly (or recklessly)/ talk nonsense/ talk at random/ unbridle the tongue

【信马由缰】xìn mǎ yóu jiāng

ride with lax reins—let things take their natural course

【信赏必罚】xìn shǎng bì fá

due rewards and punishments will be meted out

without fail/ awards and punishments rigorously carried out

【信誓旦旦】xìn shì dàn dàn

pledge in all sincerity and seriousness/ oath solemnly pledged/ vow solemnly

【信手拈来】xìn shǒu niān lái

have words, material, etc. at one's fingertips and write with facility/ pick up sth at random

【兴风作浪】xīng fēng zuò làng

stir up (or make) trouble/ become active and cause trouble/ incite and create trouble/ fan the flames of disorder/make waves

【兴利除弊】xīng lì chú bì

promote that which is profitable and abolish that which is evil/ promote what is beneficial and abolish what is harmful/ start the good and weed out the corrupt practices

【兴师动众】xīng shī dòng zhòng

move troops about and stir up the people—drag in many people (to do sth)

【兴师问罪】xīng shī wèn zuì

send a punitive expedition against

【兴妖作怪】xīng yāo zuò guài

conjure up a host of demons to make mischief (or trouble)/ make trouble/ raise the devil

【星罗棋布】xīng luó qí bù

dotted around like stars in the sky, scattered like the pieces on a chess-board/ as numerous as stars and pieces on the chess-board/ scattered all over like stars and chess-men/ spread all over the place/ scattered about in every direction/ studded with/ star-sudded

【星星之火, 可以燎原】xīng xīng zhī huǒ, kě yǐ liáo yuán

a single spark can start a prairie fire/ little chips light great fire

【星移斗转】xīng yí dòu zhuǎn

change in the positions of the stars — change of the seasons/ the movements of the stars — the flight (or passage) of time/ passing of night

【惺惺惜惺惺】xīng xīng xī xīng xīng

the intelligent ones sympathize with their own kind/ the wise appreciate one another

【惺惺作态】xīng xīng zuò tài

be affected/ simulate (friendship, innocence, etc.)

【行百里者半九十】xíng bǎi lǐ zhě bàn jiǔ shí

ninety *li* is only half of hundred-*li* journey — the going is toughest towards the end of a journey/ one must sustain one's effort when a task is nearing completion

【行成于思】xíng chéng yú sī

a deed is accomplished through taking thought/ success depends on forethought

【行将就木】xíng jiāng jiù mù

be getting nearer and nearer the coffin — be fast approaching death/ have one foot in the grave/ one's days are numbered/ on the verge of extinction

【行若无事】xíng ruò wú shì

behave as if nothing had happened

【行尸走肉】xíng shī zǒu ròu

a walking corpse — one who vegetates/ an utterly worthless person/ dead-alive person/ a walking skeleton/ be all but dead

【行同狗彘】xíng tóng gǒu zhì

behave like pigs and dogs — awful behaviour/ behave shamelessly/ make a beast of oneself

【行远自迩】xíng yuǎn zì ěr

from the near to the distant/ step by step/ advance in regular order

【行云流水】xíng yún liú shuǐ

(of style of writing) like floating clouds and flowing water — natural and smooth/ free-flowing style of writing/ with natural grace

【行之有效】xíng zhī yǒu xiào

effective (in practice)/ effectual

【形单影只】xíng dān yǐng zhī

a solitary form, a single shadow — extremely lonely/ single

【形迹可疑】xíng jī kě yí

not to be trusted — said of one who is a suspicious character/of suspicious appearance/ of doubtful aspect/ suspicious-looking

【形势逼人】xíng shì bī rén

the situation is pressing/ reality is a compelling force/ the compelling force of circumstances

【形形色色】xíng xíng sè sè

of all shades (descriptions, stripes, forms or kinds)/ of various forms/ of every hue (or description)/ in all their manifestations/ different hues/ every shade and hue/ all brands of/ many varieties

【形影不离】xíng yǐng bù lí

(of couple, lovers, close friends) never leave each other's side (like "form and shadow")/ inseparable like body and its shadow/ inseparable as form from shadow/ always together

【形影相吊】xíng yǐng xiāng diào

body and shadow comforting each other — extremely lonely/ body has only its shadow for company/ only one's form and shadow to condole with each other/ sad and solitary/ alone/ friendless

【兴高采烈】xīng gāo cǎi liè

full of spirits and elated/ in high spirits/in great form (or delight)/ (as) jolly as a sandboy/ full of beans/ go into raptures with glee/exhilaration/ jubilant

【兴味索然】xīng wèi suǒ rán

dull and uninteresting/ not to show a spark of inter-



est (in)/ bored stiff/uninterested

【兴致勃勃】xīng zhī bó bó

full of zest/ in high spirits/ a flow of spirits/ be of good cheer/ tails up/ cheerfully

【性命交关】xìng mìng jiāo guān

(a matter) of life and death/ of vital importance

【幸灾乐祸】xìng zāi lè huò

be glad when other people are in difficulties/ pleased at (or take pleasure in) the calamity of others/ gloat over (or derive pleasure from) other's misfortune/ gloatingly

【凶多吉少】xiōng duō jí shǎo

bode ill rather than well/ be fraught with grim possibilities

【凶神恶煞】xiōng shén è shà

devils/ fiends

【凶相毕露】xiōng xiàng bì lù

look thoroughly ferocious/ unleash all one's ferocity/ reveal the atrocious features/ bare one's fangs/ show one's teeth

【兄弟阋于墙】xiōng dì xié yú qiáng

quarrel between brothers/ internal dispute

【兄弟阋于墙，外御其侮】xiōng dì xié yú qiáng, wài yù qí wǔ

brothers quarrelling at home join forces against attacks from without/ internal disunity dissolves at the

threat of external invasion

【汹涌澎湃】xiōng yǒng pěng pài

rise in tempestuous waves/ rise in a surging tide/  
surge forward/ roll irresistibly onward/ sweeping  
and surging/ run high/ torrential/ surging/ turbu-  
lent/ tempestuous

【胸怀坦白】xiōng huái tǎn bái

openhearted/ frank

【胸无城府】xiōng wú chéng fǔ

open and unreserved/ quite open-minded

【胸无点墨】xiōng wú diǎn mò

completely illiterate/ unlearned/ unlettered

【胸无宿物】xiōng wú sù wù

utterly simple and unreserved

【胸有成竹】xiōng yǒu chéng zhú

definite (or ready) ideas or plans to meet a situation  
(as concept of bamboo exists in painter's mind before  
painting)/ have a well-thought-out plan, strategem,  
etc. beforehand/ have an idea in the mind before giv-  
ing expression to it/ have a card (or an ace) up one's  
sleeve

【胸中无数】xiōng zhōng wú shù

have no figures in one's head

【胸中有数】xiōng zhōng yǒu shù

have a good idea of how things stand/ know the true  
state of affairs/ have a head for figures

**【雄才大略】**xióng cái dà lüè

(a man of) great talent and bold vision/ (a man with) outstanding ability/ (a statesman or general of) rare gifts and bold strategy.

**【雄心壮志】**xióng xīn zhuàng zhì

lofty aspirations and great ideals/ lofty aspirations and high aims/ great and lofty aspirations/ lofty ambitions

**【熊熊烈火】**xióng xióng liè huǒ

raging flames

**【休戚相关】**xiū qī xiāng guān

mutually concerned in case of a good or bad turn/ joys and sorrows inter-connected/ be of close concern to each other/ be bound together in a common cause/ feeling of solidarity/ solidary

**【休戚与共】**xiū qī yǔ gòng

share joys and sorrows together/ share each other's weal and woe/ share the same fate/ share one's fortune/ throw in one's lot with/ stand (or go) together through thick and thin

**【休养生息】**xiū yǎng shēng xī

(of a nation) recuperate and multiply/ rest and build up strength/ nourish the people/ rehabilitate

**【修旧利废】**xiū jiù lì fèi

repair and utilize old or discarded things

**【羞人答答】**xiū rén dā dā

very shy/ bashful about/ coy

**【羞与为伍】** xiū yǔ wéi wǔ

consider it beneath one (or feel ashamed) to associate with sb/ ashamed to be in the same rank with sb/ ashamed to be one's colleague (or friend)

**【朽木不可雕】** xiǔ mù bù kě diāo

one cannot carve on rotten wood—intractable person/ decayed (or rotten) wood cannot be carved—said of a useless man

**【朽木粪土】** xiǔ mù fèn tǔ

decayed wood and a wall of filthy earth—a worthless man/ rotten wood and dirt/ useless stuff/ good-for-nothing/ good-for-nothing

**【秀而不实】** xiù ér bù shí

flowering but producing no fruit/ put forth flower but bear no fruit

**【袖手旁观】** xiù shǒu páng guān

put the hands in the sleeves and look on—have nothing to do with a thing/ look on with folded arms/ stand by and do nothing/ take no part in a matter/ remain indifferent (or idle) spectator/ look on unconcerned

**【绣花枕头】** xiù huā zhěn tóu

a pillow with an embroidered case—an outwardly attractive but worthless person

**【臭味相投】** xiù wèi xiāng tóu

share the same rotten tastes, habits, etc. / people of

the same ilk like each other/ be two of a kind/ like drawn to like

【虚怀若谷】xū huái ruò gǔ

a receptive mind is open to all suggestions, as a hollow mountain arouses echoes/ a receptive heart "like the valley," free from pride and prejudices/ have a mind as open as a valley/ be extremely open-minded/ be very modest

【虚己以听】xū jǐ yǐ tīng

listen with an open mind/ listen patiently

【虚情假意】xū qíng jiǎ yì

false display of affection/ hypocritical show of friendship

【虚无缥缈】xū wú piāo miǎo

(talk which is) abstruse, vague, insubstantial/ with no reality whatever/ nothing to hold on/ vague with nothing in it/ purely imaginary/ entirely unreal/ utterly visionary/ in the clouds/ visionary/ illusory

【虚位以待】xū wèi yǐ dài

leave a seat vacant (or save a seat) for sb/ a vacant seat awaits/ reserve the honored post for sb competent

【虚应故事】xū yīng gù shì

do sth perfunctorily as a mere matter of form or as a routine practice/ do sth for form's sake only/ a mere formality

【虚有其表】xū yǒu qí biǎo

deceptively handsome/ good in appearance only/ (of man) good looks without substantial ability or virility/ look impressive but lack real worth/ appear better than it is/ have all one's goods in the window/ a penny plain and twopence coloured

【虚与委蛇】xū yǔ wēi yí

deal with sb courteously but without sincerity/ pretend politeness and compliance/ pretend (to have) interest and sympathy/ hypocrisy

【虚张声势】xū zhāng shēng shì

make an empty (or false) show of strength (or power)/ make pretenses (of wealth or of power)/ make a demonstration (or display)/ make a pompous but empty show of power and influence/ bluff and bluster/ be swashbuckling/ bluffing

【嘘寒问暖】xū hán wèn nuǎn

inquire after sb's well-being/ be solicitous about sb's health

【栩栩如生】xǔ xǔ rú shēng

like real life/ true to life/ lifelike/ living

【旭日东升】xù rì dōng shēng

the morning sun rises in (or from) the east/ the sun rising in the eastern sky/ the sun from the eastern horizon/ rise like the early morning sun/ in the ascendant

【酗酒滋事】xù jiǔ zī shì

get drunk and create a disturbance

【轩然大波】xuān rán dà bō

a great disturbance/ a mighty uproar

【喧宾夺主】xuān bīn duó zhǔ

a presumptuous guest usurps the host's role/ the secondary supersedes the primary/ minor taking precedence over a major issue/ the sauce is better than the fish

【玄之又玄】xuán zhī yòu xuán

mystery of mysteries—extremely mysterious and abstruse

【旋乾转坤】xuán qián zhuǎn kūn

move heaven and earth—have great power and authority/ effect a drastic change in nature or the established order of a country/ be able to turn the tide (of national or world events)/ be earthshaking

【悬而未决】xuán ér wèi jué

be (or hang) in the scale(s)/ hang in the balance (or in the wind)/ not yet decided/ up in the air/ outstanding/ unsettled/ pending

【悬梁自尽】xuán liáng zì jìn

commit suicide by hanging oneself from a beam/hang oneself

【悬崖勒马】xuán yá lè mǎ

rein in the horse on the brink of the precipice—wake up to and escape disaster at the last moment/ draw

up short at overhanging cliff — withdraw sharply from imminent disaster/ stop (doing sth) before it is too late/ ward off disaster at the critical moment

【悬崖峭壁】xuán yá qiào bì

sheer precipice and overhanging rocks/ overhanging cliff/ cliff

【烜赫一时】xuǎn hè yī shí

shining impressive (reputation) for a time/ be far-famed for a time

【癣疥之疾】xuǎn jiè zhī jí

only a skin complaint — some slight ailment/ of little account/ not matter very much/ unimportant trouble

【绚丽多彩】xuàn lì duō cǎi

bright and colourful/ gorgeous

【削足适履】xuē zú shì lǚ

cut the feet to fit the shoes/ trim the toes to fit the shoes/ act in a Procrustean manner

【穴居野处】xué jū yě chǔ

dwelt in caves in the wilds

【学而不厌】xué ér bù yàn

have an insatiable desire to learn/ be insatiable in learning/ grind away at one's studies

【学无止境】xué wú zhǐ jìng

there is no end to learning/ there is no limit to knowledge/ knowledge is infinite

【学以致用】xué yǐ zhì yòng



study for the purpose of application/ study sth in order to apply it/ learn in order to practise

【雪上加雪】 xuě shàng jiā shuāng

adding frost to snow — one disaster after another/ disasters pile up on one another

【雪中送炭】 xuě zhōng sòng tàn

send charcoal in snowy weather — provide timely help/ send a present of firewood in cold weather/ offer fuel in snowy weather/ do yeoman's service

【血案如山】 xuè àn rú shān

with a list of bloody crimes

【血海深仇】 xuè hǎi shēn chóu

a huge debt of blood/ intense and deep-seated hatred

【血口喷人】 xuè kǒu pēn rén

malicious words to injure someone/ make unfounded and scurrilous attacks upon sb/ venomously slander/ smite with the tongue

【血流成河】 xuè liú chéng hé

blood flows enough to make a river — a large-scale slaughter/ massacre

【血流如注】 xuè liú rú zhù

shed blood like water/ a gush of blood/ bleed profusely/ bleed like a pig

【血气方刚】 xuè qì fāng gāng

in the prime of youth/ full of sap

【血肉横飞】 xuè ròu héng fēi

blood and flesh flying in every direction—describing a carnage/ bodies blown to bits.

【血肉相联】xuè ròu xiāng lián *to be related by flesh and blood/ be inseparably linked to/ have close tie with/ flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood/ bone of the bone (and flesh of the flesh*

【谑而不虐】xuè ér bù nüè *to tease without embarrassing ...*

【寻根究底】xún gēn jiù dǐ *to get to the bottom of things/ inquire deeply into/investigate (or probe) to the bottom/ sift a matter to the bottom*

【寻欢作乐】xún huān zuò lè *to seek pleasure and make merry*

【寻事生非】xún shì shēng fēi *to seek quarrel/ make trouble*

【寻章摘句】xún zhāng zhāi jù *to cull phrases but not meaning/ write in clichés without originality/ look for quotes in order to criticize or to embellish one's writings*

【循规蹈矩】xún guī dǎo jǔ *to follow rules, orders, etc. docilely/ follow the custom or law/ obey the rules and regulations/ observe due*

decorum/ stick (or conform) to convention/ follow precedent/ toe the line/ go round like a horse in a mill/ well behaved/ law-abiding

【循名责实】xún míng zé shí

expect the reality to correspond to the name/ create the reality that will fit the name/ see that reality corresponds to claims or pretensions/ live up its name

【循序渐进】xún xù jiàn jìn

follow in order and advance step by step/ proceed in an orderly way and step by step/ follow in proper sequence and make steady progress/ follow the order and gradually progress/ advance in regular order/ learn to creep before you leap/ step by step/ by stages

【循循善诱】xún xún shàn yòu

be good at giving systematic guidance/ teach with skill and patience/ lead one gradually into good practices/ lead men skillfully on by orderly method

【训练有素】xùn liàn yǒu sù

well-trained

【迅雷不及掩耳】xùn léi bù jí yǎn ěr

a sudden peal of thunder leaves no time for covering the ears/ as swift as a clap of thunder which gives no time to cover the ears/ (of actions) lightning flash (or blitz) before precautions can be taken/ as sudden as lightning/ with the suddenness of a thunderbolt

Y

【鸦雀无声】yā què wú shēng

not even a crow or sparrow can be heard—silence reigns/not even the sound of a crow or a magpie's cawing—a dead silence/ in perfect silence

【睚眦必报】yá zì bì bào

seek revenge for the smallest grievance

【哑口无言】yǎ kǒu wú yán

shut up when defeated in argument/ have nothing to say for oneself/ be left without an argument/ be rendered speechless/ struck dumb/ dumbfounded

【哑然失笑】yǎ rán shī xiào

unable to stifle a laugh/ can't help laughing/ break into laughter/ chuckle to oneself

【雅俗共赏】yǎ sú gòng shǎng

(of a work of art or literature) appeal to both the more and the less cultured/ give pleasure both to the refined and the vulgar/ suit both refined and popular tastes

【揠苗助长】yà miáo zhù zhǎng

try to help the shoots grow by pulling them up (or upward)—spoil things by excessive enthusiasm/pull

up seedling in mistaken hope of helping it to grow

【奄奄一息】yān yān yī xī

scarcely a breath left/ barely perceptible breathing/  
on the point of dying/ on one's death bed/ at one's  
last gasp/ on the verge of death/ on one's last legs

【烟消云散】yān xiāo yún sǎn

vanish like mist and smoke/ completely vanish/ dis-  
appear in a flash/ melt into air/ end (or go up) in  
smoke/ be lost in a cloud/ to the four winds/ turn to  
dust and ashes

【湮没无闻】yān mò wú wén

sink into oblivion/ drift into obscurity/ be buried in  
oblivion

【嫣然一笑】yān rán yī xiào

the captivating smile of a woman/ give a winsome  
smile

【延颈企踵】yán jǐng qǐ zhǒng

crane the neck and stand on tiptoe—be on the very  
tiptoe of expectation

【延年益寿】yán nián yì shòu

(of tonics, etc.) prolong (one's) life/ promise lon-  
gevity

【言必信,行必果】yán bī xìn, xíng bī guǒ

promises must be kept and action must be resolute/  
always be true in word and resolute in deed

【言必有中】yán bī yǒu zhòng

whenever one speaks, one speaks to the point/ whenever one says something one hits the nail on the head/ speak just to the point

【言不及义】yán bù jí yì

never talk about anything serious/ talk frivolously/ talk nonsense (all the time)



【言不由衷】yán bù yóu zhōng

not to say what one thinks in one's mind/not speak honestly/ insincere in one's words (or speech)/ speak insincerely/ speak with one's tongue in one's cheek

【言出法随】yán chū fǎ suí

upon its promulgation the law shall be enforced to the letter/ enforce the regulations to the letter

【言传身教】yán chuán shēn jiào

teach by personal example as well as verbal instruction/ set up examples for others with both precept and practice

【言而无信】yán ér wú xìn

fail to keep faith/ go back on one's word/ eat one's words

【言而有信】yán ér yǒu xìn

be as good as one's word

【言归于好】yán guī yú hǎo

make friends again/ make it up with sb/ become reconciled/ make peace with/ sink a feud/ smoke the calumet/ bury the hatchet/ start with a clean slate

**【言归正转】**yán guī zhèng zhuǎn

come back to our story/ return to the subject/ get  
(or come) to business/ jesting apart/ return from the  
digression/ return to one's muttons/ resume the  
thread of one's discourse/ keep to the record

**【言过其实】**yán guò qí shí

stretch the truth (or facts)/ pull the long bow/ turn  
geese into swans/ exaggerate/ overstate/ bombastic

**【言简意赅】**yán jiǎn yì gāi

what one says is precise and to the point/ concise and  
comprehensive/ compendious

**【言近旨远】**yán jìn zhǐ yuǎn

some simple words carry a profound meaning

**【言人人殊】**yán rén rén shū

different people give different views/ each person of-  
fers a different version

**【言听计从】**yán tīng jì cóng

always follow sb's advice/ readily listen to one's ad-  
vice and accept it/ act upon whatever sb says/ have  
implicit faith in sb

**【言外之意】**yán wài zhī yì

an implied meaning—something beyond the literal  
words/ the meaning between the lines/ implication

**【言为心声】**yán wéi xīn shēng

words are the voice of the mind/ one's words reflect  
one's thinking/ what the heart thinks the tongue

speaks

【言行不一】yán xíng bù yī

one's deeds do not match (or square with) one's words/ one's actions are not in keeping with one's promises

【言行一致】yán xíng yī zhì

act up to what one says/ practise what one preaches/ fit one's deeds (or actions) to one's words/ square one's words with one's conduct/ match words with deeds/ live up to one's promise/ deeds accord with words/ suit one's action to one's words/ one's deeds are consistent with one's words/ one's words correspond with one's action/ be as good as one's word

【言犹在耳】yán yóu zài ěr

the words are still ringing (or reverberating) in one's ears

【言者无罪，闻者足戒】yán zhě wú zuì, wén zhě zú jiè

blame not the speaker but be warned by his words/ don't blame the speaker but take his words as a warning/ do not blame the one who speaks but heed what you hear/ it is not the one who speaks is culpable; it is up to the one who listens to exercise due caution

【言之成理】yán zhī chéng lǐ

said with solid judgement/ it stands to reason/ sound reasonable/ speak in a rational and convincing way/ have (or make) sense/ well said/ hold water



【言之无物】yán zhī wú wù

(of speech or writing) be devoid of substance/ be just empty verbiage/ make an inane remark

【言之凿凿】yán zhī zuò zuò

said with definite evidence/ speak on good grounds

【严惩不贷】yán chéng bù dài

punish severely without mercy/ punish mercilessly

【严刑峻法】yán xíng jùn fǎ

severe law/ Draconian law

【严于律己】yán yú lǚ jǐ

be strict with oneself

【严阵以待】yán zhèn yǐ dài

stand (or remain) in combat readiness/ stand ready in battle array/ be prepared in full battle array/ under arms/ embattle

【沿波讨源】yán bō tǎo yuán

follow up the stream and seek the source—make a thorough investigation of a thing

【沿门托钵】yán mén tuō bō

beg from house to house with a bowl in hand

【掩鼻而过】yǎn bí ér guò

pass by holding one's nose—object to sth as being dirty

【掩耳盗铃】yǎn ěr dào líng

steal a bell while covering one's ears—self-deception/ plug (cover or stuff) one's ears while stealing a

bell—deceive oneself/ run away from one's own shadow/bury one's head in the sand/ the cat shuts its eyes when stealing (or while it steals) cream

【掩目捕雀】yǎn mù bǔ què

close the eyes to catch a bird—self-deception

【掩人耳目】yǎn rén ěr mù

deceive the public/ cover up story/ hoodwink people

【眼高手低】yǎn gāo shǒu dī

one's ability does not match one's wishes or high goal/ high in aim but low-rate in execution/ have grandiose aims but puny abilities/ great ambition but little talent/ have high ambition but no real ability/ be fastidious but incompetent

【眼花缭乱】yǎn huā liáo luàn

the eyes confused by looking at a number of things, etc. / be dazzled

【眼明手快】yǎn míng shǒu kuài

quick of eye and deft of hand/ sharp-eyed and quick-moving/ alert/ nimble

【偃旗息鼓】yǎn qí xī gǔ

lower the banners and muffle the drums—cease all activities/ roll up the flags and silence the drums/ call off the army maneuvers

【偃武修文】yǎn wǔ xiū wén

leave military pursuits and promote culture

【宴安鴆毒】yàn ān zhèn dú

indulge in pleasures and avoid dangers



seeking pleasure is like drinking poisoned wine

【燕巢幕上】yàn cháo mù shàng

a swallow's nest in a tent—precarious

【燕雀处堂】yàn què chǔ táng

swallows and sparrows nesting in the hall, unmindful of the spreading blaze—oblivious of imminent danger

【羊肠鸟道】yáng cháng niǎo dào

narrow winding trail/ meandering footpath

【羊质虎皮】yáng zhì hǔ pí

a sheep in a tiger's skin—outwardly strong, inwardly weak

【扬长而去】yáng cháng ér qù

stride away with the head in the air/ stalk off/ swagger off

【扬眉吐气】yáng méi tǔ qì

a feeling of exaltation upon fulfillment/ feel proud and elated/ hold one's head high

【扬汤止沸】yáng tāng zhǐ fèi

try to stop water from boiling by scooping it up and pouring it back—an ineffectual remedy/ stir the soup to stop boiling—a temporary redress

【阳春白雪】yáng chūn bái xuě

"the Spring Snow" (a melody of the élite in the State of Chu)—something selected and among the best/ highbrow art and literature

【阳奉阴违】yáng fèng yīn wéi

comply in public but oppose in private/ overtly agree but covertly oppose/ feign compliance while acting in opposition/ outwardly compliant but inwardly un-submissive

【洋为中用】yáng wéi zhōng yòng

make foreign things serve China

【洋洋大观】yáng yáng dà guān

an impressive (imposing or a grand) array (of sth)/ spectacular sight/ spectacular/ grandiose/ imposing

【洋洋得意】yáng yáng dé yì

be immensely proud/ look triumphant/ with evident pride/ be quite elated/ walk on (or tread upon) air/ self-satisfied/ conceited/ jauntily

【仰人鼻息】yǎng rén bí xī

dependent on the pleasure of others/ slavishly dependent on others/ live at sb's mercy/ curry to sb's every whim/ at sb's beck and call/ under sb's thumb

【养虎遗患】yǎng hǔ yí huàn

to rear a tiger is to court calamity—appeasement brings disaster/ to keep a tiger will only bring trouble upon oneself/ nourish a tiger to be a source of trouble in the future

【养精蓄锐】yǎng jīng xù ruì

conserve strength and store up energy/ strengthen the vital forces/ harness one's spiritual resources/

build up one's strength/ recuperate and build up energy/reserve oneself for

【养痍遗患】yǎng yōng yí huàn

a carbuncle neglected becomes the bane of one's life—  
leaving evil unchecked spells ruin/ warm (or cherish)  
a snake in one's bosom

【养尊处优】yǎng zūn chǔ yōu

enjoy high position and live in ease and comfort/ revel in a high position and indulge in comfort/ live a comfortable (or well-fed) life/ live (or be) in clover/ live like prince/ mollycoddle oneself

【妖魔鬼怪】yāo mó guǐ guài

demons and ghosts/ monsters of every description/ evil spirits of all kinds

【妖言惑众】yāo yán huò zhòng

spread fallacies to deceive people/ wild rumours mislead the masses/ evil doctrine misleads the public/ strange doctrines win a large following

【摇唇鼓舌】yáo chún gǔ shé

flap one's lips and beat one's tongue—wag one's tongue/ engage in loose talk (to stir up trouble)/ go canvassing

【摇旗呐喊】yáo qí nà hǎn

wave flags and shout battle cries—bang the drum for sb/ encouragement given by bystanders/ beat the drums for/ voice support for

【摇身一变】yáo shēn yī biàn

change into another form with one shake of the body—sudden change of one's attitude, view, etc. / give oneself a shake and change into another form—suddenly change one's identity/ by a sudden metamorphosis/ suddenly changed/ volte-face.

【摇头摆尾】yáo tóu bǎi wěi

shake the head and wag the tail—assume an air of complacency (or levity)

【摇尾乞怜】yáo wěi qǐ lián

wag the tail and seek pity—servile humility/ wag the tail ingratiatingly/ wag the tail and flatter/ beg like a dog/ fawn on (or upon)

【摇摇欲坠】yáo yáo yù zhuì

shaking as if about to fall/ on the verge of collapse/ hang by a thread (or hair)/ nod to its fall/ tremble in the balance/ crumbling/ ramshackle/ tumbledown/ tottering/ toppling

【遥相呼应】yáo xiāng hū yīng

echo each other at a distance/ coordinate with each other from afar

【遥遥无期】yáo yáo wú qī

at some future time—indefinite/ not (realizable, etc.) within the foreseeable future

【杳如黄鹤】yǎo rú huáng hè

disappear like the yellow crane—nowhere to be found

## 【杳无音信】yǎo wú yīn xìn

no news of sb for a long time/ no tidings have been heard for a long time/ no news has been received from sb for a long time/ there has been no news whatsoever about sb/ have never been heard of since

## 【咬文嚼字】yǎo wén jiáo zì

“chew words”—mince words in speech or writing/ pay excessive attention to wording/ speak or talk like a book/ talk pedantically

## 【咬牙切齿】yǎo yá qiè chǐ

gnash one's teeth in (or with) hatred/ gnash the teeth in anger/ grind (or clench) one's teeth

## 【要言不烦】yào yán bù fán

an important statement need not be prolix/ spoken short and to the point/ terse/ succinct

## 【药石之言】yào shí zhī yán

unpleasant but needed advice/ exhortations

## 【耀武扬威】yào wǔ yáng wēi

make a (big) show of one's strength/ show one's prowess/ parade military prowess/ bluff and bluster/ swagger before others/ put on airs/ brandish one's sword/ a warlike gesture/ mount (or ride) the high horse/ sabre-rattling

## 【野心勃勃】yě xīn bó bó

driven by wild ambition/be obsessed with ambition/

be overweeningly ambitious/ burn with ambition/  
consumed by ambition/ harbouring ambitious  
dreams/ My of ambition/ high-flying/ over-ambitious

【业精于勤】yè jīng yú qín

efficiency comes from diligence

【叶公好龙】yè gōng hào lóng

Lord Ye's love of dragons—professed love of what  
one really fears

【叶落归根】yè luò guī gēn

the leaves fall and return to the root—everything re-  
verts to its original source/ falling leaves settle on  
their roots—a person residing elsewhere finally re-  
turns to his ancestral home

【夜长梦多】yè cháng mèng duō

a long night is fraught with dreams—a long delay  
means many hitches/ there is many a slip between  
the cup and the lip

【夜郎自大】yè láng zì dà

the king of Yelang (a small kingdom in southwest  
China) thought his country was bigger than that of  
the Han Dynasty (China)—ignorant boastfulness/  
ludicrous conceit of the king of Yelang—parochial ar-  
rogance/ think no small beer of oneself

【夜以继日】yè yǐ jì rì

day and night/ round the clock

【一败涂地】yī bài tú dì



suffer a crushing defeat/be ruined (or wiped out) completely/utter failure (or defeat)/ a complete debacle/ an overwhelming defeat/ a total loss/ utterly routed/ bite the dust

【一般见识】yī bān jiàn shì

lower oneself to the same level as sb

【一板三眼】yī bǎn sān yǎn

following a prescribed pattern in speech or action/ scrupulous and methodical/ very careful of rules/ rigid

【一本万利】yī běn wàn lì

a small investment brings a ten thousand-fold profit/ make big profits with a small capital/ highly profitable

【一本正经】yī běn zhèng jīng

assume a dead serious attitude/ put on a solemn look/ with feigned impartiality/ in all seriousness/ in dead earnest/ prim and proper/ prudish/ priggishly

【一鼻孔出气】yī bí kǒng chū qì

breathe through the same nostrils—sing the same tune/ breathe (or talk) in the same way/ identify oneself with/ hold identical opinion/ be in tune with/ be cheek by jowl with/ gang up with

【一笔勾销】yī bǐ gōu xiāo

cancelled with one stroke of the pen/ write off altogether/ write off at one stroke/ abolish at one stroke/ cancel

【一笔抹杀】yī bǐ mǒ shā

wipe out with one stroke of the pen/ blot out at one stroke/ be written off at one stroke/ condemn out of hand/ reject off-hand/ completely deny/ totally negate/ set at naught/ obliterate



【一臂之力】yī bì zhī lì

a helping hand

【一波未平，一波又起】yī bō wèi píng, yī bō yòu qǐ

hardly has one wave subsided when another rises— one trouble follows another/ suffer a string of reverses

【一不做，二不休】yī bù zuò, èr bù xiū

a thing once begun will not be put off until done/once it is started, go through with it/ carry the thing through, whatever the consequences/ in for a penny, in for a pound/ over shoes, over boots/ as well be hanged for a sheep as (for) a lamb

【一步登天】yī bù dēng tiān

reach the sky in a single bound—attain the highest level in one step/ ascend to heaven at a single bound/ have a meteoric rise

【一差二错】yī chà èr cuò

possible mistake or mishap

【一唱百和】yī chàng bǎi hé

when one starts singing, all the others join in—(of

a suggestion, etc.) meet with general approval/ one sings, all follow—chime in with others

【一唱一和】yī chàng yī hè

sing a duet with sb/ sing in duet/ sing the same tune/ sing to the tune of/ sing in chorus with/ echo each other/ in tune with/ chime in with

【一尘不染】yī chén bù rǎn

not soiled by a speck of dust/ not to be stained (or soiled) with a particle of dust/ pure-hearted/ spotless

【一成不变】yī chéng bù biàn

fixed and unchangeable/ immutable and frozen/hard and fast/ be set in one's ways/ inflexible/ invariable/ changeless/ unalterable/ immutable

【一筹莫展】yī chóu mò zhǎn

couldn't suggest a move or do a thing/ can find no way out/ be at one's wits' end/ be at the end of one's tether/ find (or stick) oneself in the mire/not to have a feather to fly with/ with one's finger in one's mouth

【一触即发】yī chù jí fā

ready to be set off at a touch/ may be triggered at any moment/ be on the verge of breaking out/ touch off an explosive situation/ to an explosive point/ touch-and-go

【一触即溃】yī chù jí kuì

collapse at the first encounter/ be routed at the first encounter

## 【一蹴而就】yī cù ér jiù

reach the goal in one step/ accomplish in one move/  
accomplish at one stroke/ succeed overnight/ expect  
results overnight

## 【一寸丹心】yī cùn dān xīn

a heart of pure loyalty/ a loyal heart

## 【一寸光阴一寸金】yī cùn guāng yīn yī cùn jīn

"an inch of time is an inch of gold"—time is money

## 【一刀两断】yī dāo liǎng duàn

cut into two at one stroke of the knife/ be severed in-  
to two at one blow/ make a clean break/ sever con-  
nections with sb

## 【一得之功】yī dé zhī gōng

just an occasional, minor success

## 【一得之愚】yī dé zhī yú

my humble opinion— (polite expression)

## 【一而再,再而三】yī ér zài, zài ér sān

once and again/ time and again/ again and again/  
more than once/ repeatedly

## 【一发千钧】yī fà qiān jūn

a hundredweight hanging by a hair—in imminent per-  
il/a thousand piculs suspended by a single hair/ in a  
most dangerous condition (very critical situation)/ an  
impending disaster/ hang upon a thread/ be in the  
balance/ by (or with) the skin of one's teeth/ the  
sword of Damocles

- 【一帆风顺】yī fān fēng shùn  
have a favourable wind throughout the voyage/ sail before (or with) the wind/ plain (or smooth) sailing/ without a hitch/ good innings
- 【一反常态】yī fǎn cháng tài  
depart from one's normal behaviour/ act out of character
- 【一改故辙】yī gǎi gù zhé  
depart from the old rut and courageously set on a new way/ rid oneself on an old habit
- 【一概而论】yī gài ér lùn  
treat (different matters) as the same/ lump people or things under one head/ put in the same category/ lump together
- 【一干二净】yī gān èr jìng  
root and branch/ lock, stock and barrel/ hook, line and sinker/ thoroughly/ completely/ neat and tidy/ spick-and-span
- 【一鼓作气】yī gǔ zuò qì  
at the first drum courage is aroused/ with one effort it can be accomplished/ press on to the finish without letup/ get sth done in one vigorous effort/ at one fling/ at a dash
- 【一棍子打死】yī gùn zi dǎ sǐ  
knock sb down at one stroke/ finish off with a single blow/ kill with a blow/ deal one fatal blow/

shatter at one stroke/ completely negate

【一国三公】yī guó sān gōng

a state with three rulers—divided leadership

【一哄而散】yī hōng ér sǎn

disperse after making a noise/ break up

【一呼百诺】yī hū bǎi nuò

when one gives a call, a hundred respond—have hundreds at one's beck and call

【一呼百应】yī hū bǎi yīng

a call draws response from hundreds of people—an appeal meets with immediate response/ hundreds respond to a single call/ ready to go into action in their hundreds

【一挥而就】yī huī ér jiù

a flourish of the pen and it's done/ finish a piece of writing or a painting at one go/ be done with one stroke of the pen

【一技之长】yī jī zhī cháng

proficiency in a particular line (or field)/ professional skill/ a single skill/ speciality

【一见如故】yī jiàn rú gù

feel like old friends at the first meeting/ become fast friends at the first meeting/ friendly at the first meeting

【一见钟情】yī jiàn zhōng qíng

fall in love (with one) at first sight/ love at first

sight

【一箭双雕】yī jiàn shuāng diāo

shoot two hawks with one arrow/ one arrow shot two eagles/ kill two birds with one stone/ answer a double purpose/ achieve two things at one stroke/ dual gain

【一举成名】yī jǔ chéng míng

become famous overnight/ achieve instant fame

【一举两得】yī jǔ liǎng dé

achieve two things at one stroke/ kill two birds with one stone

【一决雌雄】yī jué cí xióng

wage a decisive fight or battle against—see who is master/fight to see who is the stronger/ have a showdown with/ fight it out

【一蹶不振】yī jué bù zhèn

once fall, never rise again/ unable to get up after a fall/ collapse after one setback/ never be able to recover after a setback/ be roundly defeated/ fail utterly

【一刻千金】yī kè qiān jīn

every moment is precious/ value every minute

【一孔之见】yī kǒng zhī jiàn

a narrow (limited, partial or peep-hole) view

【一览无余】yī lǎn wú yú

take in everything at a glance

【一劳永逸】yī láo yǒng yì

by one supreme effort to win eternal ease/ put things right once and for all/ get sth done once (and) for all/ solutions that hold good for all time

【一了百了】yī liǎo bǎi liǎo

one finished all is finished—when a man is dead, everything is finished/ all troubles end when the main trouble ends/ death ends all one's troubles

【一鳞半爪】yī lín bàn zhǎo

just a few known details of a larger whole/ odd bits/ fragments

【一路平安】yī lù píng ān

have a pleasant journey/ have a good trip/ a pleasant journey to you/ a safe journey/ bon voyage

【一落千丈】yī luò qiān zhàng

drop 10000 feet in one fall—suffer a sudden (disastrous, ruinous or calamitous) decline/ a precipitate (great or terrific) drop/ rapid declension

【一马当先】yī mǎ dāng xiān

gallop at the head/ dash to the front of battle/ take the lead/ be in the fore-front/ be in the van

【一马平川】yī mǎ píng chuān

a wide expanse of flat land/ flat country

【一脉相承】yī mài xiāng chéng

come down in one continuous line/ can be traced to the same origin/ be imbued with the same spirit/ be a



true disciple of/ run in a single (or continuous) line/  
follow the same/ in the same strain/ of the same  
school/ a continuation of

【一毛不拔】yī máo bù bá

unwilling to give up even a hair—very stingy/unwill-  
ing even to pluck out a hair for another—not to give a  
cent (to charity)/ very sparing in spending money/  
not to lift (of stir) a finger to help/ refuse to be put  
to trouble/ as close as a clam/ cheese-paring/ miser-  
ly/ parsimonious

【一面之词】yī miàn zhī cí

the statement of only one of the parties/ one-sided  
statement

【一面之交】yī miàn zhī jiāo

have met only once/ be casually acquainted

【一鸣惊人】yī míng jīng rén

(of an obscure person) amaze the world with a single  
brilliant feat/ make one's mark at the first shot/ win  
popularity with the first work/ set the Thames on  
fire/ rocket to fame

【一命呜呼】yī mìng wū hū

be snuffed out/ kick the bucket/ launch into eterni-  
ty/ go west/ pass away/ drop dead/ die

【一模一样】yī mó yī yàng

exactly alike/ be exactly the same as/ as like as two  
peas

## 【一目了然】yī mù liǎo rán

understand fully at a glance/ be clear (or manifest)  
at a glance/ see all at a glance/ see with half an eye/  
be written all over one's face/ carry on its face/ he  
that (or who) runs may read/ leap to the eye

## 【一目十行】yī mù shí háng

take in ten lines at one glance (said of a rapid reader)

## 【一念之差】yī niàn zhī chà

a wrong decision made in a moment of weakness  
(with serious consequences)/ a momentary slip

## 【一诺千金】yī nuò qiān jīn

a verbal promise is worth a thousand ounces of gold/  
a promise that will be kept/ one's word is as good as  
one's bond/ a solemn promise/ a bargain's a bargain

## 【一拍即合】yī pāi jí hé

fit in readily/ chime in easily

## 【一盘散沙】yī pán sǎn shā

a heap (a plate, a sheet or a tray) of loose sand—a  
nation or group without cohesion, each individual for  
himself/ lacking spirit of cooperation/ in a state of  
disunity

## 【一贫如洗】yī pín rú xǐ

as poor as though everything was washed away/ as

poor as a church mouse/ as poor as Job/ not to have a shirt to one's back/ be on one's uppers/ in utter destitution/ poverty-stricken/ penniless

【一抔黄土】yī póu huáng tǔ

only a clod (or handful) of yellow earth—a grave/ mere dust heaps/ sth utterly insignificant

【一暴十寒】yī pù shí hán

warm for one day and cold for ten days—work on and off/ work hard for one day and do nothing for ten/ work (or do things) by fits and starts

【一气呵成】yī qì hē chéng

(of an essay) form a coherent whole/ make smooth reading/ get sth done at one go/ accomplish sth without any interruption or letup/ at a heat/ at a stretch/ at a dash/ in a breath

【一钱不值】yī qián bù zhí

not worth a penny/ utterly worthless/ mere trash

【一窍不通】yī qiào bù tōng

know nothing of (or about)/ be utterly ignorant of/ utterly stupid and dense/ lack the slightest knowledge of/ not to know the first thing about sth/ not know the ABC of/ be (all) Greek to (sb)/ out of one's element/ impenetrably dull/ an absolute block-head/a complete ignoramus

【一清二楚】yī qīng èr chǔ

completely (or perfectly) clear/ as plain as daylight

【一穷二白】yī qióng.èr bái

poor and blank/ poverty and blankness/ backward both economically and culturally

【一丘之貉】yī qiū zhī hé

jackals of the same lair/ birds of a feather/ tigers from the same den/ brigands of the same stripe/ tarred with the same brush (or stick)/ cut from the same cloth/ patterned from the same mould/ of the same batch

【一去不复返】yī qù bù fù fǎn

gone and never to return/ once gone, never come back/ gone forever/ leave for good

【一人传虚,万人传实】yī rén chuán xū, wàn rén chuán shí

one man tells an idle story and it becomes fact in the mouths of ten thousand

【一人得道,鸡犬升天】yī rén dé dào, jī quǎn shēng tiān

when a man attains the Tao (enlightenment and immortality), even his pets ascend to heaven—when a man gets to the top, all his friends and relations get there with him

【一人难如千人意】yī rén nán rú qiān rén yì

one man can hardly meet the wishes of everybody

【一日千里】yī rì qiān lǐ

one thousand *li* a day—at a tremendous pace/ with

giant strides/ tremendous forward strides/ rapid advance/ by leaps and bounds

【一日三秋】yī rì sān qiū

one day (away from a dear one) seems like three years—miss sb very much/ a day of separation seems (to be) as long as three years/ a day absent from you is like three seasons (or years)

【一如既往】yī rú jì wǎng

as in the past/ as before/ as always

【一扫而空】yī sǎo ér kōng

swept clean at one attempt

【一身是胆】yī shēn shì dǎn

know no fear/ be absolutely fearless

【一失足成千古恨】yī shī zú chéng qiān gǔ hèn

a single slip may cause lasting sorrow/ the error of a moment becomes the regret of a lifetime/ one false step brings everlasting grief/ a wrong step taken results in eternal regret

【一视同仁】yī shì tóng rén

treat all alike without discrimination/ extend the same treatment to all/ give equal treatment to both/ regard all with equal favour/ be equally kind to all/ impartial kindness or favour/ not to make chalk of one and cheese of the other/ give the devil his due

【一事无成】yī shì wú chéng

achieve (or accomplish) nothing/ nothing (or not a thing) accomplished/ get nowhere

【一手包办】yī shǒu bāo bàn

keep everything in one's own hands/ take everything on oneself/ control exclusively/ stage-manage

【一手遮天】yī shǒu zhē tiān

shut out the heavens with one hand—hide the truth from the masses/ hoodwink the public

【一丝不苟】yī sī bù gǒu

not a bit negligent/ scrupulous about every detail/ conscientious and meticulous/ dot the i's and cross the t's

【一丝不挂】yī sī bù guà

not have a stitch on/ be stark-naked

【一丝一毫】yī sī yī háo

a tiny bit/ an iota/ the slightest/ a little/ an atom of/ a shred of/ a trace of

【一塌糊涂】yī tā hú tú

in a complete mess/ in an awful state/ in an awful mess/ in a muddle/ a hell of a mess

【一塌刮子】yī tā guā zi

the sum total/ a grand total

【一潭死水】yī tán sǐ shuǐ

a pond of stagnant water—a stagnated, dull atmosphere

【一团和气】yī tuán hé qì

keep on good terms with everyone at the expense of

principle/ keep on the right side of everyone/ a prevailing mood of harmony/ unprincipled peace/harmony all round/ an easy-going atmosphere

【一网打尽】yī wǎng dǎ jìn

catch all (or the whole lot) in a dragnet/ capture all in one net/ round up the whole gang at one fell swoop/ take (them) all at one haul of the net/ all captured at once

【一往情深】yī wǎng qíng shēn

passionately devoted to/ deeply attached to/ be head over heels in love with/ be far gone in love

【一往无前】yī wǎng wú qián

press forward with indomitable will/ forge ahead/ indomitable

【一望而知】yī wàng ér zhī

one glance and you know—apparent to the eye/ manifest at a glance/ very obvious

【一望无际】yī wàng wú jì

stretch as far as the eye can see/ stretch to the horizon/ beyond the reach of a glance/ boundless

【一文不值】yī wén bù zhí

not worth the paper on which it is written/ not worth a cent (a penny, a farthing, a stiver, a button, a pin or a rush)/ not amount to a row (or a hill) of beans (or pins)

【一问三不知】yī wèn sān bù zhī

say "I don't know" to every question—not know a thing/be entirely ignorant

【一无可取】yī wú kě qǔ

not one good thing to be said/ nothing to recommend/ neither rhyme nor reason/ good-for-nothing/ worthless

【一无是处】yī wú shì chù

without a single redeeming feature/ devoid of any merit/ nothing is right/ can never get anything right

【一无所长】yī wú suǒ cháng

have no special skill (or ability)/ be Jack of all trades/ superior in no respect

【一无所有】yī wú suǒ yǒu

not own a thing in the world/ not have a thing to one's name/ without a single thing/ have nothing at all/ have not a stiver/ as bare as the palm of one's hand/ walk on one's shoestrings/ penniless/ destitute

【一无所知】yī wú suǒ zhī

know absolutely nothing/ know nothing about/ without knowing a single thing/ not have the least inkling of/ absolutely ignorant of/ a total stranger to

【一五一十】yī wǔ yī shí

(narrate) systematically and in full detail

【一物降一物】yī wù xiáng yī wù

there is always one thing to conquer another/ everything has its vanquisher



## 【一误再误】yī wù zài wù

make one error after another/ one error leads to another/ keep on making mistakes/ make things worse by repeated delays

## 【一息尚存】yī xī shàng cún

so long as one still has a breath left/ as long as one lives/ till one's last gasp

## 【一相情愿】yī xiāng qíng yuàn

(one's own) wishful thinking

## 【一笑置之】yī xiào zhì zhī

dismiss with a laugh (or smile)/ dispose it with a smile/ laugh off

## 【一蟹不如一蟹】yī xiè bù rú yī xiè

each crab is smaller than the one before—each one is worse than the last/ from bad to worse/ get worse and worse

## 【一泻千里】yī xiè qiān lǐ

(of a river) rush down a thousand *li*—flow down vigorously/ (of a writer's style) forceful and flowing

## 【一心一德】yī xīn yī dé

of one heart and one mind/ whole-heartedly and faithfully/ with united will/ be at one

## 【一心一意】yī xīn yī yì

with one heart and one mind/ with all one's heart and mind/ put one's whole heart and soul into (sth)/ give one's whole mind to/ be bent on/ be intent on (or up-

on)/ heart and soul/ with undivided attention/  
wholeheartedly

【一言既出,驷马难追】 yī yán jì chū, sì mǎ nán zhuī  
a word once spoken cannot be overtaken even by a  
team of four horses—what is said cannot be unsaid

【一言难尽】 yī yán nán jìn  
mere words cannot fully express it—it is a long sto-  
ry/ it is hard to explain in a few words

【一言为定】 yī yán wéi dìng  
that's settled then/ it's (or that's) a whack/ a bar-  
gain is a bargain

【一言以蔽之】 yī yán yǐ bì zhī  
to sum up the whole business in one phrase/ to sum  
up in a word/ make a long story short/ in a word/ in  
a nutshell/ in short/ in a few words/ summarily/  
briefly

【一叶障目,不见泰山】 yī yè zhàng mù, bù jiàn tài  
shān  
a leaf before the eye shuts out Mount Taishan—have  
one's view of the important overshadowed by the  
trivial

【一叶知秋】 yī yè zhī qiū  
one falling leaf is indicative of the coming of au-  
tumn—everything is part of a whole/ the falling of  
one leaf heralds the autumn/ a straw shows which

way the wind blows/ it is a straw in the wind/ a small sign can indicate a great trend

【一衣帶水】yī yī dài shuǐ

a narrow strip of water

【一意孤行】yī yì gū xíng

persist in wilfully and arbitrarily/ act in disregard of other people's opinions/ bent on acting wilfully/ cling obstinately to one's own course/ follow one's bigoted course/ be hell-bent on having one's way/go (take, have or follow) one's own way/ act arbitrarily/ wheel and deal

【一语道破】yī yǔ dào pò

get to the heart of the matter in a few words/ puncture a fallacy with one remark/ lay bare the truth with one penetrating remark/ burst out the truth/ hit the nail on the head

【一语破的】yī yǔ pò dì

hit the mark with a single comment/ hit target with one remark/ hit the nail on the head/ come to the point

【一则以喜，一则以惧】yī zé yǐ xǐ, yī zé yǐ jù

feel both joy and fear

【一张一弛】yī zhāng yī chí

alternate tension with relaxation—strike a proper balance between work and rest

【一着不慎，满盘皆输】yī zhāo bù shèn, mǎn pán jiē

shū

one careless move and the whole game is lost/ a single careless move spoils the entire game/ a trip in one point would have spoiled all

【一朝被蛇咬,十年怕井繩】 yī zhāo bèi shé yǎo, shí nián pà jǐng shéng

once bitten by a snake, one shies at a coiled rope for the next ten years—once bitten, twice shy/ a burnt child dreads the fire/ the scalded cat fears cold water

【一朝一夕】 yī zhāo yī xī

in one morning or evening/ in a day/ a short duration of time/ overnight

【一针见血】 yī zhēn jiàn xiě

pierce to the truth with a single pertinent remark/ reveal the heart of the matter in a few words/ go right to the heart of the matter/ make a pointed remark/ touch one on the raw/ hit the nail on the head/ hit the bird in the eye/ straight from the shoulder

【一枕黃粱】 yī zhěn huáng liáng

Golden Millet Dream—a brief dream of grandeur

【一知半解】 yī zhī bàn jiě

a smattering (hearsay) of knowledge/ scanty (or half-baked) knowledge/ limited and half-understood knowledge/ superficial knowledge/ half knowledge/

sciolism

【一纸空文】yī zhǐ kōng wén

a mere scrap of paper/ a bit of waste paper/ empty words on a sheet of paper

【一掷千金】yī zhì qiān jīn

stake a thousand pieces of gold on one throw/ gamble at high stakes/ spend money extravagantly/ spend lavishly/ throw away money like dirt/ spend money like water

【一字千金】yī zì qiān jīn

one character is worth a thousand ounces of gold/  
one character is worth much gold

【衣不蔽体】yī bù bì tǐ

be dressed in rags/ be in rags (clothing cannot cover the body)

【衣冠楚楚】yī guān chǔ chǔ

immaculately dressed/ smartly dressed/ well groomed/ neat and trim in appearance/ put on the ritz

【衣冠禽兽】yī guān qín shòu

a beast in human clothing (form, dress or attire)/ a dressed-up beast/ a brute

【衣架饭囊】yī jià fàn náng

mere material for a clothes-horse and a food-bag—  
useless lazy persons/ a good-for-nothing person/  
good-for-nought

【衣锦还乡】yī jǐn huán xiāng

return to one's hometown in silken robes—return home after making good

【依然故我】yī rán gù wǒ

one's circumstances haven't changed much/ one is still one's same old self/ as of old

【依然如故】yī rán rú gù

all the same as it (or they) was (or were)/ remain as before/ remain unchanged (or the same)/ none the better (for)/ none the worse (for)

【依违两可】yī wēi liǎng kě

be undecided/ have no definite conviction of one's own

【依样画葫芦】yī yàng huà hú lú

sketch the gourd according to the pattern—follow the beaten track/ draw a dipper with a gourd as the model/ do the routine thing without thinking/ slavishly copy or imitate/ copy mechanically/ play the sedulous ape/ape others

【依依不舍】yī yī bù shě

reluctant (or unwilling) to part from (or with)/ have a great (strong or invincible) attachment (to)/ feelings of regret at parting/ cannot bear to leave (or part)

【怡然自得】yí rán zì dé

happy and pleased with oneself/ happy and satisfied

【贻害无穷】yí hài wú qióng

cause endless trouble to future/ entail untold troubles

【贻人口实】yí rén kǒu shí

give people basis for gossip/ give occasion for talk/  
give people grounds for ridicule/ be a source of  
ridicule/ expose oneself to ridicule

【貽笑大方】yí xiào dà fāng

make a laughing stock of oneself before experts/ be-  
come a laughing-stock by showing inability/ incur  
the ridicule of experts/ be laughed at by those who  
know/ be laughed at by experts

【移风易俗】yí fēng yì sú

change prevailing (or existing) customs and habits/  
transform established traditions and practices/ trans-  
formation of customs and habits/ transform social  
traditions/ bring about a change in morals and mores

【移花接木】yí huā jiē mù

graft one twig on another/ graft and transplant/  
stealthily substitute one thing for another/ place a  
substitute by subterfuge/ palm off the spurious for  
the genuine/ graft

【移山倒海】yí shān dǎo hǎi

remove mountains and drain seas—transform nature/  
overpower natural forces/ conquer nature

【遺臭万年】yí chòu wàn nián

leave a stink for ten thousand years—go down in his-  
tory as a byword of infamy/ leave a bad name for  
thousands of years to come/ leave a name that stinks  
through the ages/ leave a bad name forever/ be con-  
demned (or cursed) by posterity/ an everlasting

shame/ remain forever infamous

【颐指气使】yí zhǐ qì shǐ

order people about by gesture/ be insufferably arrogant

【疑神疑鬼】yí shén yí guǐ

imagine all sorts of things/ be terribly suspicious/ even afraid of one's own shadow/ oversensitive

【疑团莫释】yí tuán mò shì

doubts and suspicions can not be cleared up/ dark shadows of doubt lurking in one's mind

【疑心生暗鬼】yí xīn shēng àn guǐ

a suspicious heart will see ghosts—suspicions create imaginary fears

【以暴易暴】yǐ bào yì bào

replace one tyranny by another

【以德报怨】yǐ dé bào yuàn

return good for evil/ repay (or recompense) injury with kindness/ requite ingratitude with kindness

【以毒攻毒】yǐ dú gōng dú

combat poison with poison/ use poison as an antidote to poison/ cure a poisoned patient with poison/ counteract one toxin with another/ like cures like/ set a thief to catch a thief/ fight fire with fire/ take a hair of the dog that bit you

【以讹传讹】yǐ é chuán é

pass on rumours, incorrect readings, etc. / incorrectly relay erroneous message (so that it becomes increas-



ingly distorted)/ spread an error or a falsehood/ pass on erroneous version/ circulate erroneous reports

【以耳代目】yǐ ěr dài mù

rely upon hearsay instead of seeing for oneself/ take hearsay as true

【以攻为守】yǐ gōng wéi shǒu

use attack as a means of defence/ use offensive tactics as a means of defence/ attack in order to defend

【以寡敌众】yǐ guǎ dí zhòng

pit the few against the many/ fight (or battle) against heavy odds/ set one's back against the wall

【以观后效】yǐ guān hòu xiào

(lighten a punishment and) see how the offender behaves

【以己度人】yǐ jǐ duó rén

judge others by oneself/ measure others after oneself/ measure others' corn by one's own bushel/ measure another's (or sb's) foot by one's own last

【以儆效尤】yǐ jǐng xiào yóu

in order to warn against bad example/ to warn others against following a bad example/ as a warning to others

【以蠡测海】yǐ lí cè hǎi

measure the sea with an oyster shell—have a shallow understanding of a person or subject

【以理服人】yǐ lǐ fú rén

convince people by reasoning/ convince people by sound argument/ persuade through reasoning

【以力服人】yǐ lì fú rén

try to convince people by force/ cause people to submit by force

【以邻为壑】yǐ lín wéi hè

use one's neighbour's field as a drain—shift one's troubles onto others/ use the neighbour's field as an outlet for one's overflow/ dump rubbish in the neighbour's yard

【以卵投石】yǐ luǎn tóu shí

throw an egg against a rock—court defeat by fighting against overwhelming odds/ like an egg knocking itself against a stone/ court self-destruction/ throw an egg at a stone/ grossly overestimate one's own strength

【以貌取人】yǐ mào qǔ rén

judge people solely by their appearance/ choose by appearances/ judge by outward looks

【以身殉职】yǐ shēn xùn zhí

die a martyr at one's post

【以身作则】yǐ shēn zuò zé

make oneself serve as (an) example to others/ set an example with one's own conduct/ make oneself an example/ set a good example to others/ take the lead

【以手加額】yǐ shǒu jiā é

place hand over one's forehead—in greeting

【以售其奸】yǐ shòu qí jiān

in order to achieve one's treacherous purpose

【以退为进】yǐ tuì wéi jìn

retreat in order to advance/ make concessions in order to gain advantages

【以小人之心，度君子之腹】yǐ xiǎo rén zhī xīn, duó jūn zǐ zhī fù

measure the stature of great men by the yardstick of small men/ like a dwarf plumbing the heart of a giant with his midget sounding rod/ measure the mind of an upright man by the yardstick of a knave

【以血还血】yǐ xuè huán xuè

the blood-debt must be repaid in kind/ demand (or pay) blood for blood

【以眼还眼，以牙还牙】yǐ yǎn huán yǎn, yǐ yá huán yá

eye for eye, tooth for tooth/ blow for blow/ tit for tat/ measure for measure/ like for like/ give as good as one gets/ (give sb) a Roland for an Oliver

【以一当十】yǐ yī dāng shí

pit one against ten

【以一警百】yǐ yī jǐng bǎi

punish one as a warning to others

【以逸待劳】yǐ yì dài láo

wait at one's ease for the fatigued (or exhausted) enemy or opponent/ hold one's position awaiting enemy

attack after long march

【以怨报德】yǐ yuàn bào dé

return evil for good/ repay good with evil/ requite kindness with ingratitude/ recompense good with evil/bite the hand that feeds one

【以子之矛,攻子之盾】yǐ zǐ zhī máo, gōng zǐ zhī dùn

set your own spear against your own shield—refute sb with his own argument/ turn sb's battery against himself

【倚官仗势】yǐ guān zhàng shì

rely on one's power and position/ count on one's powerful connections

【倚老卖老】yǐ lǎo mài lǎo

take advantage of one's seniority or old age (to ignore manners, regulations, etc.)/ capitalize on being advanced in age/ presume on old age to despise others/ flaunt one's seniority

【义不容辞】yì bù róng cí

one's sense of honor makes it impossible to refuse/ an obligation one cannot escape/ act from a strong sense of duty/ be incumbent upon one to/ be duty-bound/ have an unshirkable duty

【义愤填膺】yì fèn tián yīng

be filled with righteous indignation/ wrath surged in one's heart/ anger for justice filled one's breast/ boil

with indignation

【义无反顾】yì wú fǎn gù

honour permits no turning back/ be duty-bound not to turn back/ proceed without hesitation

【义形于色】yì xíng yú sè

with indignation written on one's face/ one's face showed no compromise with evil

【义正辞严】yì zhèng cí yán

speak sternly out of a sense of justice/ speak with the force of justice/ in no uncertain terms/ in categorical terms

【忆苦思甜】yì kǔ sī tián

recall past suffering and think over the source of present happiness/ tell of one's sufferings in the old society and one's happiness in the new/ contrast past misery with present happiness

【亦步亦趋】yì bù yì qū

if someone else takes one step, they follow with the same step/ ape sb at every step/ imitate sb's every move/ follow in one's steps/ perform to someone's baton/dance to sb's tune/ follow slavishly/ blindly follow suit

【异端邪说】yì duān xié shuō

a heterodox opinion (or doctrine)/ teachings that lead one astray/ heretical beliefs/ unorthodox opinions

【异乎寻常】yì hū xún cháng

extraordinary/ unusual/ uncommon/ abnormal

【异军突起】yì jūn tū qǐ

a new force suddenly coming to the fore

【异口同声】yì kǒu tóng shēng

cry out in one voice/ join in the same chorus of/ sing the same tune in different keys/ all agree/ a myriad voices with one sound/ with one voice/ with one accord/ by common consent/ in unison/ in chorus/ without a dissentient voice/ unanimously

【异曲同工】yì qǔ tóng gōng

different tunes rendered with equal skill—different in approach but equally satisfactory in result/ achieve the same goal with different means/ different approaches contribute to same end/ play the same tune on different instruments/ the same result achieved by different methods/ the same meaning expressed in different words

【异想天开】yì xiǎng tiān kāi

come out with most fantastic ideas/ have strange, fantastic ideas/ indulge in the wildest fantasy/ have a maggot in one's head (or brain)/ give rein to fancy/ expect wonders/ a flight of fancy/ a kick in one's gallop/ stretch of the imagination/ wild hopes/ wishful thinking/ freakish/ vagarious/ fantastic

【抑扬顿挫】yì yáng dùn cuò

modulation in tone/ cadence

【易如反掌】yì rú fǎn zhǎng

as easy as turning one's hand over/ as easy as turning over one's palm/as easy as falling off a log/ as easy as pie/ like taking candy from a baby/ very easy to do

【意气风发】yì qì fēng fā

high-spirited and vigorous/ daring and energetic/ be fired with boundless enthusiasm/ high in spirits/ be on one's mettle/ be full of pep

【意气相投】yì qì xiāng tóu

have the same likes and dislikes/ be alike in temperament/ be congenial with each other

【意气用事】yì qì yòng shì

be swayed by personal feelings/ act on impulse

【意在言外】yì zài yán wài

the meaning is implied

【毅然决然】yì rán jué rán

put one's foot down/ determinedly/ wilfully/ resolutely/ firmly

【因材施教】yīn cái shī jiào

teach students in accordance with their aptitude/ teach a person according to what he is good for

【因地制宜】yīn dì zhì yí

suit measures to local conditions/ adapt the working method to the local conditions/ take such measures as are suitable to local conditions/ do the right thing on the right place/ bear in mind local needs and possi-

bilities/ adaptation to local conditions/ in a manner appropriate to local conditions

【因陋就简】yīn lòu jiù jiǎn

make do with whatever is available/ make use of the available conditions/ manage with the poor equipment at hand/ adapt oneself to the available conditions/ do things simply and thriftily/ economize because of lack of funds

【因人成事】yīn rén chéng shì

rely on others for success in work

【因人设事】yīn rén shè shì

create a job to accommodate a person

【因时制宜】yīn shí zhì yí

do the right thing at the right time/ in a manner suitable to the (particular) time/ do what is suitable to the occasion

【因势利导】yīn shì lì dǎo

adroitly guide (or channel) action according to circumstances/ give proper guidance as the situation requires/ guide it along its course of development/ make the best use of the situation to guide sth to

【因小失大】yīn xiǎo shī dà

try to save a little only to lose a lot/ lose a great deal through trying to save a little/ lose the main goal because of small gains/ suffer a big loss for a little gain/ lose the sheep for a halfpennyworth of tar/ sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage



**【因循守旧】** yīn xún shǒu jiù

stick to old ways/ follow the beaten track (or path)/  
traditionalistic/ lockstep

**【因循坐误】** yīn xún zuò wù

sit back and allow the situation to deteriorate/ pro-  
crastinate until it is too late

**【因噎废食】** yīn yē fèi shí

give up eating for fear of choking—refrain from doing  
sth necessary for fear of a slight risk/ stop eating al-  
together on account of a hiccup—unjustified giving  
up of a good cause/ throw away the apple because of  
the core

**【阴错阳差】** yīn cuò yáng chā

(a mistake or error due to) a strange combination of  
circumstances

**【阴魂不散】** yīn hún bù sǎn

the soul (or spirit) refuses to leave/ the ghost of...  
inexorably hangs on/ the shadow of...still lingers on/  
haunting spectre

**【阴谋诡计】** yīn móu guǐ jì

schemes and intrigues/ intrigues and plots/ conspira-  
cies and plots/ intrigues and manoeuvres/ underhand  
schemes and machinations/ dark and crafty devices/  
underhand methods/ plot/ scheme/ ruse

**【阴阳怪气】** yīn yáng guài qì

mystifying/ enigmatic/ queer/ eccentric/ cynical

**【殷鉴不远】** yīn jiàn bù yuǎn

past examples serving as a warning to later generations are not far to seek/ one need not look far for a lesson

**【吟风弄月】** yín fēng nòng yuè

sing of the moon and the wind—write sentimental verse

**【寅吃卯粮】** yín chī mǎo liáng

eat the food stored up for the next year/ eat next year's food/ eat one's corn in the blade/ forced to borrow today's food against tomorrow's income/ draw one's pay in advance/ anticipate one's income/ live beyond one's means

**【银样镞枪头】** yín yàng là qiāng tóu

a pewter spearhead that shines like silver—an impressive looking but useless person

**【引而不发】** yǐn ér bù fā

draw the bow but not discharge the arrow/ draw the bow without shooting (just indicate the motions)

**【引吭高歌】** yǐn háng gāo gē

sing (or shout) with outstretched neck/ sing at the top of one's voice/ sing joyfully in a loud voice/ sing heartily

**【引火烧身】** yǐn huǒ shāo shēn

draw fire against (to or on) oneself—make self-criticism to encourage criticism from others/ guide a fire to burn one's own body—a self-destructive course of

action

【引经据典】yǐn jīng jù diǎn

copiously quote authoritative works/ give quotations from classics or ancient works/ quote the classics

【引狼入室】yǐn láng rù shì

invite (bring or let) a wolf into the house—open the door to a dangerous foe/ set a fox to keep one's geese/ set the wolf to keep the sheep

【引人入胜】yǐn rén rù shèng

open up a new view/ interesting and absorbing/ fascinating/ attractive/ enchanting/ bewitching/ tempting/ alluring

【引人注目】yǐn rén zhù mù

attract one's attention/ attract the gaze of the people/ arrest one's eye (or attention)/ be in (or come into) the public eye/ leap to the eyes/ come to the front/ cut a conspicuous figure/ in the limelight/ noticeable/ conspicuous/ spectacular

【引以为鉴戒】yǐn wéi jiàn jiè

learn (or draw) a lesson (from a previous error, etc.)/ serve as a warning/ take warning

【饮恨而终】yǐn hèn ér zhōng

die with a grievance in one's heart

【饮泣吞声】yǐn qì tūn shēng

swallow one's tears/ weep silent tears/ gulp down sobs (or rage)/ put one's pride in one's pocket

【饮水思源】yǐn shuǐ sī yuán

when you drink water, think of its source—never forget where one's happiness comes from/ think of the fountain when drinking the water/ let every man praise the bridge he goes over

【饮鸩止渴】yǐn zhèn zhǐ kě

drink poison to quench (one's) thirst—seek temporary relief regardless of the consequences/ remedy worse than what it is supposed to cure/ temporary relief which results in disaster/ a supposed remedy having the opposite effect

【隐恶扬善】yǐn è yáng shàn

cover up sb's faults and publicize his merits/ hide sb's wrongdoing and praise his good deeds/ conceal what is evil and publish what is good/ conceal faults of others and praise their good points

【隐晦曲折】yǐn huì qū zhé

insidious and devious/ veiled and round-about

【隐姓埋名】yǐn xìng mái míng

conceal one's name and surname/ conceal one's identity/ keep one's identity hidden/ live incognito/live in the shadow

【隐约其辞】yǐn yuē qí cí

use ambiguous language/ speak in equivocal terms/ implicit meaning

【应有尽有】yīng yǒu jìn yǒu

there is everything that should be there/ have everything that one expects to find/ well-stocked

【英雄所见略同】yīng xióng suǒ jiàn lüè tóng  
great minds think alike

【英雄无用武之地】yīng xióng wú yòng wǔ zhī dì  
a hero with no place to display his prowess—no scope to exercise one's abilities/ a hero with no scope for displaying his heroism/ no scope for one's energies

【英姿飒爽】yīng zī sà shuǎng  
valiant and heroic in bearing/ bright and brave

【莺歌燕舞】yīng gē yàn wǔ  
orioles sing and swallows dart—the joy of spring/ a scene of prosperity

【鸢其鸣矣,求其友声】yīng qí míng yī, qiú qí yǒu shēng  
a bird sings to call forth a friend's response

【鸢学舌】yīng wǔ xué shé  
repeat the words of others like a parrot/ echo another's words/ parrot

【迎刃而解】yíng rèn ér jiě  
(of a bamboo) split all the way down once it's been chopped open—(of a problem) be easily (or readily) solved/ splits off as if meets the edge of the knife without efforts/ solve problems or difficulties with the greatest ease

【迎头赶上】yíng tóu gǎn shàng  
try hard to catch up

**【迎头痛击】** yíng tóu tòng jī

score a hard, direct hit/ deal head-on blows to sb/  
deal a telling (or severe) blow to sb/ give sb a bad  
knock on the head/ give sb a good hiding/ head-on  
hammer-blows

**【营私舞弊】** yíng sī wǔ bì

engage in malpractices for selfish ends/ practise  
graft/ be corrupt in politics/ malpractices/ jobbery

**【蝇头小利】** yíng tóu xiǎo lì

very small profit/ petty gains (or profits)

**【蝇营狗苟】** yíng yíng gǒu gǒu

shamelessly seek personal gain

**【应对如流】** yíng duì rú liú

one's replies flowed like a stream/ reply readily and  
fluently/ answer the questions without any hitch/  
give fluent replies

**【应付自如】** yíng fù zì rú

handle a situation with ease/ cope with successfully/  
be equal to the occasion/ rise to the occasion

**【应接不暇】** yíng jiē bù xiá

have more visitors or business than one can attend  
to/ too many (affairs, visitors) to attend to/ play  
host to a constant stream of callers/ too busy to at-  
tend to/ up to one's ears in work

**【应运而生】** yíng yùn ér shēng

arise at the historic moment/ emerge as the times

require

【庸人自扰】yōng rén zì rǎo

all unnecessary fuss made by the simple-minded/worry about troubles of one's own imagining/ make much ado about nothing

【庸言庸行】yōng yán yōng xíng

commonplace words and deeds

【庸中佼佼】yōng zhōng jiǎo jiǎo

a giant among dwarfs

【永垂不朽】yǒng chuī bù xiǔ

eternal glory to/ live forever in the hearts of/ win immortality/ will go down to posterity/ be engraved for all time/ undying/ immortal

【永志不忘】yǒng zhì bù wàng

will always bear in mind/ will always cherish the memory of sb or sth

【勇冠三军】yǒng guān sān jūn

distinguish oneself by peerless valour in battle

【勇往直前】yǒng wǎng zhí qián

march (or go) forward courageously (or fearlessly)/ march forward without hesitation/ stride bravely forward/ advance bravely/ dauntless march/ take one's courage in both hands/ go well up to bridle/ up hill and down dale

【勇武过人】yǒng wǔ guò rén

surpass others in valour/ be surpassingly valorous

**【用兵如神】** yòng bīng rú shén

direct military operations with miraculous skill/ work miracles in manoeuvring troops/ be a superb military commander

**【优柔寡断】** yōu róu guǎ duàn

irresolute and hesitant/ incapable of taking strong decision/ infirm of purpose/ weak-minded/ shilly-shally/ yea and nay/ indecisive/ irresolutely

**【优胜劣败】** yōu shèng liè bài

“the superior win and the inferior lose”—survival of the fittest

**【优哉游哉】** yōu zāi yóu zāi

living a life of ease and leisure/ completely free and at ease/ leisurely and carefree/ leisurely and unhurried

**【忧患余生】** yōu huàn yú shēng

the remaining years after going through a great deal/ the remainder of one's life after a disaster/ narrow escape from disaster

**【忧心忡忡】** yōu xīn chōng chōng

be sick at heart/ feel gloomy/ laden with anxieties/ anxiety-ridden/ care-laden, heavyhearted

**【忧心如焚】** yōu xīn rú fén

burning with anxiety/ extremely worried/ devour one's heart

**【悠然自得】** yōu rán zì dé



be carefree and content

【犹豫不决】yóu yù bù jué

hesitate to act or choose one's course/ inability to make up one's mind/ halt between two opinions/ remain undecided/ be in two minds/ yea and nay/ back and fill/ hang fire/ shilly-shally/ indecision/ hesitate/ vacillate/ waver

【油腔滑调】yóu qiāng huá diào

full of guile and cunning/ tongue in cheek/ persuasive but not reliable (talker) /unctuous/ glib/ slick/ plausible (speech)

【油头滑脑】yóu tóu huá nǎo

an oily sharper/ as slippery as an eel/ flippant

【油嘴滑舌】yóu zuǐ huá shé

have a well-oiled tongue/ mealy-mouthed/ smooth-tongued/ glib-tongued/ oleaginous/ slick

【游刃有余】yóu rèn yǒu yú

handle a butcher's cleaver skilfully — do a job with skill and ease/ be more than equal to a task

【游手好闲】yóu shǒu hào xián

loaf about/ live in idleness/ eat the bread of idleness/ idle away one's time/ not to do a stitch of work/ keep (one's) hands in pockets/ sit on one's hands/ lounge idly

【有案可稽】yǒu àn kě jī

can be found in (official) records/ be on record/ be

documented

【有板有眼】yǒu bǎn yǒu yǎn

rhythmical/ measured/ orderly

【有备无患】yǒu bèi wú huàn

where there is precaution there is no danger/ be prepared and you won't be sorry/ with all precautions taken, one is safe/ preparedness averts peril/ preparedness prevents calamity/ be prepared against want/ ready for all things/ prepared for a rainy day/ readiness is all

【有的放矢】yǒu dì fàng shǐ

shoot the arrow at the target—have a definite object in view/ with a well-defined objective in mind

【有福同享,有祸同当】yǒu fú tóng xiǎng, yǒu huò tóng dāng

share joys and sorrows/ share weal and woe/ stick together through thick and thin

【有过之而无不及】yǒu guò zhī ér wú bù jí

go even farther than/ be actually stronger than/ with even greater/ outdo

【有机可乘】yǒu jī kě chéng

there is an opportunity to take advantage of/ there's a loophole that can be used/ (think) there's a crack to wedge oneself into/ avail oneself of the opportunity (or occasion)/ have a chance of

【有加无已】yǒu jiā wú yǐ

increase endlessly/ be on the increase

【有教无类】yǒu jiào wú lèi

with education there is no distinction between classes or races of men/ in teaching make no class distinctions/ proper education levels all social classes

【有口皆碑】yǒu kǒu jiē bēi

enjoy great popularity (popular impression, opinion or assessment) among the people/ win universal praise/ be universally acclaimed

【有口难分】yǒu kǒu nán fēn

find it hard to vindicate oneself

【有口难言】yǒu kǒu nán yán

become tongue-tied/ can hardly speak/ cannot bring oneself to mention sth/ find it hard (or embarrassing) to bring up a matter/ too embarrassing to say (it)

【有口无心】yǒu kǒu wú xīn

say sharp things but cherish no malice/ be sharp-tongued but not malicious

【有名无实】yǒu míng wú shí

have the name without the reality/ in name but not in reality/ exist in name only/ merely nominal/ titular/ figurehead

【有目共睹】yǒu mù gòng dǔ

be there for all to see/ be obvious (or clear) to all/ plain for everybody to see for himself

【有目共赏】yǒu mù gòng shǎng

everyone gives praise at sight of/ win high praise from anyone who sees it/ have a universal appeal/ appreciated by all/ universally approved

【有奶便是娘】yǒu nǎi biàn shì niáng

whoever suckles me is my mother/ submit oneself to anyone who feeds one/ lick the hand of anyone who throws a few crumbs

【有其父, 必有其子】yǒu qí fù, bì yǒu qí zǐ

like father, like son

【有气无力】yǒu qì wú lì

faint and weak/ feeble/ languid(ly)/ listless(ly)

【有求必应】yǒu qiú bì yīng

respond to every plea/ grant whatever is requested/ grant whatever asked/ always grant requests/ ask and you will receive/ never refuse a request

【有声有色】yǒu shēng yǒu sè

full of sound and colour—vivid and dramatic/ quite vivid (or alive)/ a vivid description

【有识之士】yǒu shí zhī shì

a person with breadth of vision/ a man of insight

【有始无终】yǒu shǐ wú zhōng

start sth but fail to carry it through

【有始有终】yǒu shǐ yǒu zhōng

having a beginning and an end/ carry sth through to the end/ prosecute to the end/ finish what has been

started

【有恃无恐】yǒu shì wú kǒng

with someone at his back, he does not fear anything/  
secure in the knowledge that one has strong backing/  
have sth secure to rely on/ feel reassured and em-  
boldened/ be emboldened by the support/ count on  
one's own cards

【有条不紊】yǒu tiáo bù wěn

everything in good order and well arranged/ with  
regularity and thoroughness/ without any confusion/  
in an orderly way/ in perfect order/ in regular se-  
quence/ in apple-pie order/ in good shape/ orderly/  
methodically/ close-grained/ systematic

【有条有理】yǒu tiáo yǒu lǐ

very clear and precise/ properly and logically ar-  
ranged/ well organized and clearly arranged/ method-  
ical/ orderly

【有头无尾】yǒu tóu wú wěi

have a beginning but no end—a thing given up be-  
fore it is finished/ begin well but fall off towards the  
close/ leave sth half done/ start off but never finish/  
give up halfway/ unfinished

【有闻必录】yǒu wén bì lù

jot down all one has heard of

【有血有肉】yǒu xuè yǒu ròu

(of descriptions in literary works, etc.) true to life/  
vivid and substantial/ vivid

【有言在先】yǒu yán zài xiān

make clear beforehand/ forewarn/ as agreed (or promised) before

【有眼不识泰山】yǒu yǎn bù shí tài shān

have eyes but fail to see Mt Tai—fail to recognize someone's eminence/ entertain an angel unawares

【有眼无珠】yǒu yǎn wú zhū

have eyes without pupils/ have eyes but see not/ unable to discriminate/ lack of discernment/ eyes and no eyes

【有一利必有一弊】yǒu yī lì bì yǒu yī bì

if there is an advantage, there will surely be something to the contrary—nothing is perfect/ there are both advantages and disadvantages

【有勇无谋】yǒu yǒng wú móu

have valour but lack strategy/ be brave but not resourceful/ more brave than wise/ be foolhardy

【有则改之, 无则加勉】yǒu zé gǎi zhī, wú zé jiā miǎn

correct mistakes if you have made any and avoid them if you have not/ correct mistakes if you have committed them and guard against them if you have not

【有朝一日】yǒu zhāo yī rì

some day/ one day

【有志竟成】yǒu zhì jìng chéng

the man who has a settled purpose (or firm resolve)  
will surely succeed/ success goes to the determined/  
where there is a will there is a way

【有志之士】yǒu zhì zhī shì

a person of noble aspirations/ a person with lofty ideals

【又红又专】yòu hóng yòu zhuān

both red and expert/ both socialist-minded and vocationally proficient

【又要马儿跑得好,又要马儿不吃草】yòu yào mǎ ér pǎo dé hǎo, yòu yào mǎ ér bù chī cǎo

you can't expect the horse to run fast when you don't let it graze/ you can't make a horse work without feeding it/ you can't eat your cake and have it

【诱敌深入】yòu dí shēn rù

lure the enemy troops in deep

【余音绕梁】yú yīn rào liáng

the lingering sounds of the music winds around the beams/ the music lingered in the air

【余勇可贾】yú yǒng kě gǔ

still having plenty of fight left in one/ with one's strength not exhausted/ with strength yet to spare

【鱼龙混杂】yú lóng hùn zá

dragons and fish jumbled together—good and bad people mixed up

【鱼米之乡】yú mǐ zhī xiāng

a land of fish and rice—a land of plenty

【鱼目混珠】yú mù hùn zhū

pass off fish eyes as pearls—pass off the sham as the genuine/ pass fish eyes for pearls/ mix the genuine with the fictitious/ palm fish-eyes off as pearls

【鱼游釜中】yú yóu fǔ zhōng

like fish swimming in a cooking pot—in imminent peril

【愚公移山】yú gōng yí shān

the Foolish Old Man removed the mountains

【愚昧无知】yú mèi wú zhī

stupid and ignorant/ benighted/ idiotic/ unintelligent

【愚者千虑，必有一得】yú zhě qiān lǜ, bì yǒu yī dé

even a fool occasionally hits on a good idea

【与虎谋皮】yǔ hǔ móu pí

ask a tiger for its hide—a doomed petition/ request sb (usu. an evil person) to act against his own interests

【与人为善】yǔ rén wéi shàn

do good for people/ help others kind-heartedly

【与日俱增】yǔ rì jù zēng

grow with each passing day/ be steadily on the increase/ multiply daily

【与世长辞】yǔ shì cháng cí

depart from the world for ever/ pass away



【与世无争】yǔ shì wú zhēng

hold oneself aloof from the world/ stand aloof from worldly success/ reconcile oneself to one's situation

【与众不同】yǔ zhòng bù tóng

different with (or from) the others/ out of the ordinary

【羽毛丰满】yǔ máo fēng mǎn

become full-fledged

【羽毛未丰】yǔ máo wèi fēng

young and immature (or inexperienced)/ unfledged

【雨过天晴】yǔ guò tiān qíng

the sun shines again after the rain/ after a storm comes a calm

【雨后春笋】yǔ hòu chūn sǔn

spring up like bamboo shoots after a spring rain/  
spring up like mushrooms

【语无伦次】yǔ wú lún cì

speak incoherently/ ramble in one's statement

【语焉不详】yǔ yǎn bù xiáng

it is mentioned but not in detail/ not speak in detail/  
not elaborate

【语重心长】yǔ zhòng xīn cháng

talk in earnest/ in all earnestness/ sincere words and earnest wishes/ significantly/ meaningfully

【玉不琢，不成器】yù bù zhuó, bù chéng qì

if jade is not cut and polished, it cannot be made into

anything/ jade requires chiselling—as man needs training and discipline

【玉石俱焚】yù shí jù fén

jade and stone burned together—indiscriminate destruction of good and bad alike/ jade and stone both burned—good men destroyed with the bad

【郁郁寡欢】yù yù guǎ huān

feel depressed/ depressed and not talking much/ be in low spirits/ be out of humour/ mope about/ joylessly/ atrabilious/ gloomy/ melancholy

【浴血奋战】yù xuè fèn zhàn

fight a bloody battle/ battle courageously

【欲罢不能】yù bà bù néng

unable to stop even though one wants to/ try to stop but cannot/ cannot refrain from carrying out/ cannot help carrying on

【欲盖弥彰】yù gài mí zhāng

the more one tries to hide, the more one is exposed/ the more one tries to cover up, the more one is exposed to public view/ the harder one tries to conceal a thing, the more it attracts attention/ the more concealed, the more conspicuous/ who excuses himself, accuses himself

【欲壑难填】yù hè nán tián

greed is like a valley that can never be filled/ the covetous are never satisfied/ avarice knows no bounds

【欲加之罪，何患无辞】 yù jiā zhī zuì, hé huàn wú cí

if you are out to condemn sb, you can always trump up a charge/ if you want a pretence to whip a dog, say that he ate the frying-pan.

【欲擒故纵】 yù qín gù zòng

let the enemy off in order to catch him/ leave sb at large the better to apprehend him/ allow sb more latitude first to keep a tighter rein on him afterwards

【欲取姑与】 yù qǔ gū yǔ

in order to take, one must first give/ give in order to take/ make concessions for the sake of future gains

【欲速则不达】 yù sù zé bù dá

haste does not bring success/ haste brings no success/ things done in a hurry cannot be done well/ haste makes waste/ more haste, less speed/ too swift arrives as tardy as too slow

【遇事生风】 yù shì shēng fēng

sow discord whenever possible

【鷸蚌相争，渔翁得利】 yù bàng xiāng zhēng, yú wēng dé lì

when the snipe and the clam grapple, the fisherman profits—it's the third party that benefits from the tussle/ contention between a snipe and a clam—a beneficial chance to fisherman to catch both/ if a snipe and a clam are locked in fight, it is only to the advantage of the fisherman/ if two parties fight, a

third party will benefit

【冤家路窄】yuān jiā lù zhǎi

the road of enemies is narrow—they will be sure to meet/ enemies will meet in a narrow alley—confrontation inevitable/ enemies are bound to meet on a narrow road/ one can't avoid one's enemy (much as one wants to)

【原封不动】yuán fēng bù dòng

keep sth in its totality/ maintain unchanged in its original state/ keep intact/ take over sum and substance/ with no change/ untouched

【原形毕露】yuán xíng bì lù

be revealed for what one is/ reveal one's real nature/ show one's true colours/ show the cloven hoof/ betray oneself

【原原本本】yuán yuán běn běn

give chapter and verse for/ from beginning to end

【圆凿方枘】yuán zuò fāng ruì

like a square tenon for a round mortice—at variance with each other/ square handle and round socket

【缘木求鱼】yuán mù qiú yú

climb (up) a tree to catch (seek for or look for) fish—a useless search/ do things by the wrong method/ try to do the impossible/ milk the bull (or ram)/ get (or wring) water from a flint

【源源不绝】yuán yuán bù jué

a steady flow of/ a constant torrent of/ an uninterrupted flow/ in a steady stream/ inexhaustible

【源源而来】yuán yuán ér lái

come continuously (like a stream)/ move on in a continuous stream/ incessantly coming

【源远流长】yuán yuǎn liú cháng

a distant source and a long stream—of long standing and well established/ date from ancient times/ of ancient origin and long development

【远见卓识】yuǎn jiàn zhuō shí

foresight and sagacity/ a long view/ farsighted

【远交近攻】yuǎn jiāo jìn gōng

(policy of) attacking nearby neighbor and maintaining friendly relations with more distant nations/ befriend the distant states while attacking those nearby/ befriending the distant enemy while attacking the nearer one

【远水不解近渴】yuǎn shuǐ bù jiě jìn kě

distant water cannot quench (or slake) present thirst—the aid is too slow in coming to be of any help

【远水不救近火】yuǎn shuǐ bù jiù jìn huǒ

distant water won't put out a fire close at hand—a slow remedy cannot meet an urgency/ water far away is not of much use in putting out a fire

【远走高飞】yuǎn zǒu gāo fēi

run far away and fly high up—get away from home/ slip away to distant place/be off to distant parts

【怨声载道】yuàn shēng zài dào

complaints are heard everywhere/ cries of discontent  
rise all round/ the murmurs filled the streets

【怨天尤人】yuàn tiān yóu rén

blame god and man—blame everyone and everything  
but oneself/ blame fate and others/ curse and swear/  
grumble

【约定俗成】yuē dìng sú chéng

(certain name or customs) established by the people  
through long social practice/ established by usage/  
accepted through common practice

【约法三章】yuē fǎ sān zhāng

agree on a three-point law—make a few simple rules  
to be observed by all concerned

【月下老人】yuè xià lǎo rén

the old man under the moon—the god who unites  
persons in marriage/ matchmaker

【跃跃欲试】yuè yuè yù shì

be anxious to try one's chance/ be eager to have a  
try/ itch to have a go/ itch for a try

【越俎代庖】yuè zǔ dài páo

kitchen assistant taking place of the chef—do what is  
not in one's department/ exceed one's functions and  
meddle in others' affairs/ take another's job into one's  
own hands/ poke one's nose into other's business

【晕头转向】yūn tóu zhuàn xiàng

lose one's head (or bearings)/ confused and disoriented/ muddle-headed

【云消雾散】yún xiāo wù sǎn

the clouds melt and the mists disperse—vanish into thin air

【运筹帷幄】yùn chóu wéi wò

prepare schemes in the tent—make plans beforehand/ devise strategies within a command tent/ contrive strategic plans in the headquarters/ map out strategy

【运用自如】yùn yòng zì rú

grasp and skilfully apply/ handle very skilfully/ have a perfect command of/ make oneself master of

## Z

【杂乱无章】zá luàn wú zhāng

without pattern or order/ without order or logical connection/ disorderly and unsystematic/ out of order/ in wild disorder/ all in confusion/ be all in a muddle/ be at sixes and sevens/ be at loose ends/ out of joint/ rough-and-tumble/ disorganized/ higgledy-piggledy

【在劫难逃】zài jié nán táo

it is fate, and cannot be avoided/ there is no escape

from fate/ if you're doomed, you're doomed/ impossible to escape

【在所不辞】zài suǒ bù cí

will not refuse under any circumstances/ will not hesitate to/ will never decline

【在所不惜】zài suǒ bù xī

will not grudge/ will never balk at

【在所难免】zài suǒ nán miǎn

can hardly be avoided/ impossible to be avoided/ be unavoidable/ inevitable

【再接再厉】zài jiē zài lì

make unremitting (persistent or determined) efforts/ make sustained and redoubled efforts/ work ceaselessly and unremittingly/ advance from strength to strength/ continue to exert oneself/ intensify (or redouble) one's efforts

【再三再四】zài sān zài sì

time and again/ again and again/ over and over (again)/ time after time/ times out of number/ repeatedly

【再衰三竭】zài shuāi sān jié

be nearing exhaustion/ be weakened and demoralized

【载歌载舞】zài gē zài wǔ

festively singing and dancing/ now singing, now dancing

【赞不绝口】zàn bù jué kǒu



be unstinting in one's praise/ be profuse in praise/ be full of praise/ be prodigal of praise/ be above (or beyond all) praise/ praise unceasingly

【造谣惑众】zào yáo huò zhòng

spread rumours to confuse (or mislead) the people

【造谣生事】zào yáo shēng shì

cause trouble by false stories/ stir up trouble by rumourmongering/ spread rumours to create trouble/ cause trouble by spreading rumours

【造谣中伤】zào yáo zhòng shāng

spread rumours to injure other's reputation/ make up stories to defame others/ hurt sb by calumnious fabrication/ utter slander against sb

【择善而从】zé shàn ér cóng

choose and follow what is good/ find the good way and follow it/ follow what is good in others

【责无旁贷】zé wú páng dài

there is no shirking responsibility/ a responsibility one cannot relinquish/ be duty-bound/ an inescapable duty/ unshirkable duty/ bounden duty

【责有攸归】zé yǒu yǒu guī

responsibility for crime can be traced/ responsibility rests where it belongs/ cannot shift the blame onto others

【啧有烦言】zé yǒu fán yán

there are a lot of complaints

【贼喊捉贼】zéi hǎn zhuō zéi

a thief crying "Stop thief"/ the robber cries "Stop thief"/ thief crying for the thief/ a robber acting like a cop/ cover oneself up by shouting with the crowd/ the devil rebuking sin

【贼去关门】zéi qù guān mén

lock the door after the thief has gone/ lock (or shut) the stable door when (or after) the horse is (or has been) stolen

【贼头贼脑】zéi tóu zéi nǎo

behaving stealthily like a thief/ stealthy/ furtive

【债台高筑】zhài tái gāo zhù

be heavily in debt/ run heavily into debt/ pile up debts/ over head and ears in debt/ deep in debt/ be up to one's ears (or eyes) in debt/ be (or become) debt ridden

【沾沾自喜】zhān zhān zì xǐ

be very pleased with oneself/ feel complacent/ pat oneself on the back/ look like the cat who swallowed the canary/ play the peacock/ self-complacent/ self-contented

【瞻前顾后】zhān qián gù hòu

look ahead and behind—be overcautious and indecisive/ weigh one's steps by thinking of consequences/ look fore and aft/ take into account both past experience and the situation that may possibly arise in the

future/ circumspect

【斩草除根】zhǎn cǎo chú gēn

cut the weeds and dig up the roots—destroy evil,  
leaving no chance of its revival/ when cutting weeds,  
remove the roots as well/ mow grass and pull up the  
root/ pull up weeds by the root/ stamp out the  
source of trouble/ pluck up the evil by the roots/ up-  
root evil/ eliminate the cause of

【斩钉截铁】zhǎn dīng jié tiě

“chop up nail and cut through iron”—show firm de-  
termination/ resolute and decisive/ with decision and  
dispatch/ make it definitely clear/ without mincing  
words/ resolutely/ categorically/ explicitly/ decisive-  
ly/ determinately

【辗转反侧】zhǎn zhuǎn fǎn cè

toss to and fro (in bed)/ toss and turn restlessly/  
toss about (in one's sleep)

【战天斗地】zhàn tiān dòu dì

fight against heaven and earth/ combat nature/ brave  
the elements

【战无不胜,攻无不克】zhàn wú bù shèng, gōng wú bù  
kè

win in every battle/ never lose a battle/ all-conquer-  
ing/ ever-triumphant/ ever-victorious/ invincible

【战战兢兢】zhàn zhàn jīng jīng

trembling with fear (or fright)/ with fear and trepi-

dation/ with caution/ quake with consternation/ be extremely mindful of one's steps/ fearful of making mistakes/ watchful of possible pitfalls/ be on thin ice/ tread (as) on eggs/ gingerly

【张灯结彩】zhāng dēng jié cǎi

decorate with lanterns and coloured hangings (or streamers)/ hang up lanterns and silk festoons/ hang up lanterns and coloured bunting (or festoons, decorations, etc.)

【张冠李戴】zhāng guān lǐ dài

Zhang's cap on Li's head—a misplacement/ Zhang's hat worn by Li, mixed up identity/ substitute one for another/ fasten one person's story upon another person/ confuse one thing with another

【张皇失措】zhāng huáng shī cuò

be scared out of one's wits (or senses)/be frightened and at a loss to know what to do/ be in a flurry of alarm/ be thrown off one's balance/ lose one's grip/ lose one's head/ lose mental control/ fall into a flutter/ get into a panic/ stand aghast

【张口结舌】zhāng kǒu jié shé

be agape and tongue-tied/ gape with astonishment/ be at a loss for words/ stare with the mouth open/ be stumped by/ agape/ awe-struck/ stupefied

【张三李四】zhāng sān lǐ sì

Zhang, Li or anybody/ any Tom, Dick or Harry/ this one and that one/ either one or the other/ anybody



**【张牙舞爪】** zhāng yá wǔ zhǎo

bare fangs and brandish claws—make threatening gesture/ show one's fangs and claws—ready to fight/ bare one's fangs and open one's claws/ let out the fangs and claws/ bare one's teeth/ show one's claws/ indulge (or engage) in sabre-rattling/ blustering/ rampant

**【彰明较著】** zhāng míng jiào zhù

very clearly shown/ be known to everyone/ (of guilt) quite evident/ very obvious/ easily seen

**【獐头鼠目】** zhāng tóu shǔ mù

with the head of a buck and the eyes of a rat—repulsively ugly and sly-looking

**【掌上明珠】** zhǎng shàng míng zhū

“a pearl in the palm”—a dearly beloved daughter/ the apple of one's eye/a darling

**【仗势欺人】** zhàng shì qī rén

take advantage of one's or sb else's power to bully people/ bully others on the strength of one's powerful connections or position/ rely on (relative's or friends') power and bully people/ abuse one's power and bully the people/ throw one's weight about

**【仗义疏财】** zhàng yì shū cái

be generous in aiding needy people/ disburse money in public cause/ give money to righteous cause

**【仗义执言】** zhàng yì zhí yán

speak out from a sense of justice/ speak out to uphold justice/ speak boldly in defence of justice

**【招兵买马】** zhāo bīng mǎi mǎ

recruit men and buy horses—raise or enlarge an army/ enlist followers/ expand a fighting force/ gather together a following of mercenaries/ prepare for war

**【招架不住】** zhāo jià bù zhù

unable to hold one's own/ unable to withstand

**【招降纳叛】** zhāo xiáng nà pàn

recruit deserters and accept mutineers/ recruit deserters and traitors

**【招摇过市】** zhāo yáo guò shì

swagger through the streets—blatantly seek publicity/pass along the streets dressed to attract attention/swagger about/ cut a dash/ cut a (wide) swath

**【招摇撞骗】** zhāo yáo zhuàng piàn

try every trick to mislead the public/ swindle by false pretenses/ swindle and bluff/ bluff and deceive/ gull, hoax and bamboozle/ imposture

**【昭然若揭】** zhāo rán ruò jiē

clearly exposed/ be laid before the public (said of sinister motive, etc. )/ as plain as when the cover is taken off/ everything above board/ abundantly clear/ all too clear/ (as) clear as daylight/ clear as crystal/ as plain as the nose on one's face/ (as) clear as the sun

at noonday

【朝不保夕】zhāo bù bǎo xī

not know in the morning what may happen in the evening/ be in a precarious state

【朝不谋夕】zhāo bù móu xī

be unable to plan out one's day/be preoccupied with the current crisis/ live from hand to mouth/ live in constant fear for one's livelihood/ cannot keep the wolf from the door

【朝发夕至】zhāo fā xī zhì

start at dawn and arrive at dusk—(said of a short journey or good communications)

【朝令夕改】zhāo lìng xī gǎi

issue an order in the morning and rescind it in the evening—inconstant (or inconsistent) in policy/ the orders of the morning countermanded at night—make frequent (or unpredictable) changes in policy

【朝气蓬勃】zhāo qì péng bó

full of vigour and vitality/ full of youthful spirit/ dynamic and vigorous/ imbued with vitality/ bubble over with life/ teem with life and vitality/ brim over with high spirits/ full of beans/ fresh and vigorous/ brisk and energetic

【朝秦暮楚】zhāo qín mù chǔ

“serve the State of Qin in the morning and the State of Chu in the evening”—quick to switch sides/ fickle and inconstant/ change one's loyalty constantly

【朝三暮四】zhāo sān mù sì

blow hot and cold/ play fast and loose/ chop and change/ shift and veer/ capricious/ changeable

【照本宣科】zhào běn xuān kē

read item by item from the text/ repeat what the book says

【照猫画虎】zhào māo huà hǔ

draw a tiger with a cat as a model—copy; imitate

【折冲樽俎】zhé chōng zūn zǔ

outmanoeuvre the enemy over glasses of wine/ win by diplomacy/ engage in diplomatic negotiations

【撒乱旗靡】sǎ luàn qí mǐ

chariots in disorder and banners drooping—utterly routed/ crisscross chariot tracks and drooping banners—signs of an army in headlong flight

【针锋相对】zhēn fēng xiāng duì

stand in sharp opposition to/ be diametrically opposed to/ contrast sharply with/ wage a tit-for-tat struggle against/ blow for blow

【真才实学】zhēn cái shí xué

real ability and learning/ sturdy knowledge/ genuine talent

【真金不怕火】zhēn jīn bù pà huǒ

true gold fears no fire—a person of integrity can stand severe tests/ a genuine article can stand any test/ an honest person does not fear the light/ truth



fears not the flames of slander and injustice/ true  
blue will never stain

【真凭实据】zhēn píng shí jù

(with) factual evidence/ indisputable (hard or con-  
clusive) evidence/ solid evidence

【真伪莫辨】zhēn wěi mò biàn

can't distinguish (or tell) the genuine from the false/  
can't separate the true from the false

【真相大白】zhēn xiàng dà bái

everything is clear now/ the whole truth has come  
out/ the murder is out/ the cat is out of the bag

【真心实意】zhēn xīn shí yì

from the bottom of one's heart/ with all one's heart/  
out of genuine friendship/ sincere desire/ truly and  
wholeheartedly

【真知灼见】zhēn zhī zhuó jiàn

insight won from close knowledge of subject/ real  
knowledge and deep insight/ penetrating (or incisive)  
judgement

【枕戈待旦】zhěn gē dài dàn

lie with one's head pillowed on a spear, waiting for  
day to break—be ready for battle/ with spear for pil-  
low awaiting dawn/ sleep on one's arms till morning/  
await eagerly the order for battle/ maintain combat  
readiness/ all set to start the battle/ in fighting trim/  
in battle array

【振聋发聩】zhèn lóng fā kuī

rouse the deaf and awaken the unhearing/ awaken the deaf/ enlighten the benighted

【振振有词】zhèn zhèn yǒu cí

speak plausibly and at length/ say plausibly/ say presumptuously/ speak in a positive tone

【震耳欲聋】zhèn ěr yù lóng

make the ears tingle/ split the ears/ enough to wake the dead/ a deafening noise/ ear-splitting/ deafening

【震古铄今】zhèn gǔ shuò jīn

surpassing the ancients and amazing the contemporaries—earthshaking

【震撼人心】zhèn hàn rén xīn

be greatly shocked/ shocking

【争长论短】zhēng cháng lùn duǎn

dispute with sb about some insignificant matter/ wrangling about anything/ squabble/ argue

【争分夺秒】zhēng fēn duó miǎo

race against time/ seize every minute and every second

【争权夺利】zhēng quán duó lì

scramble for power and profit/ struggle for power and money/ fight for power and wealth

【争先恐后】zhēng xiān kǒng hòu

strive to be the first and fear to lag behind/ in a mad rush to be first/ rush on to the front/ vie with each other (in doing sth) / fall over each other (or one

another)

【峥嵘岁月】zhēng róng suì yuè

crowded months and years/ eventful years

【蒸蒸日上】zhēng zhēng rì shàng

thrive with each passing day / become more prosperous every day / ever more flourishing / vigorous and fast developing / greater and greater prosperity / be in the ascendant

【正本清源】zhèng běn qīng yuán

deal with the root and cleanse the source—radical reform/ reform from the bottom/ thoroughly over-haul

【正襟危坐】zhèng jīn wēi zuò

straighten one's clothes and sit properly/ be all seriousness

【正人君子】zhèng rén jūn zǐ

a man of honour/ gentlemen

【正言厉色】zhèng yán lì sè

with a severe and harsh countenance/ look serious and severe/ put on a stern countenance/ sedate and grave

【正中下怀】zhèng zhòng xià huái

that is exactly my idea ( or exactly what I wish )/ become exactly what one wants/ be just what one hopes for/ fit in exactly with one's wishes/ after one's ( or one's own ) heart ( or soul )/ after sb's fancy

【郑重其事】zhèng zhòng qí shì

take sth seriously/ act with due care and respect/ assume a serious attitude to/ in earnest/ seriously

【之乎者也】zhī hū zhě yě

pedantic terms/ literary jargon/ archaisms

【支离破碎】zhī lí pò suī

torn to pieces/ broken up/ breaks and cracks/ fragmented/ shattered/ disconnected/ incoherent

【支吾其词】zhī wú qí cí

prevaricate with words/ speak evasively/ hum and haw/ fence with a question/ equivocate/ quibble

【只言片语】zhī yán piàn yǔ

a word or two/ a few isolated words and phrases

【只字不提】zhī zì bù tí

not say a single word (about sth)/ not even mention a single word/ say nothing about

【知彼知己,百战不殆】zhī bǐ zhī jǐ, bǎi zhàn bù dài

know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat/ to know one's own strength and the enemy's is the sure way to victory

【知法犯法】zhī fǎ fàn fǎ

knowingly violate the law/ deliberately break the law/ wilful transgression

【知过必改】zhī guò bì gǎi

always correct an error when one becomes aware of

it/ know one's faults and correct them

【知难而进】zhī nán ér jìn

press forward in the face of difficulties/ advance despite difficulties

【知难而退】zhī nán ér tuì

beat a retreat in the face of difficulties/ shrink back from difficulties

【知其一, 不知其二】zhī qí yī, bù zhī qí èr

know only one aspect of a thing/ have only a one sided view/ be aware of one aspect and be ignorant of the other

【知人善任】zhī rén shàn rèn

(of a leader) know one's subordinates well enough to assign them jobs commensurate with their abilities/ use a man according to his ability

【知无不言, 言无不尽】zhī wú bù yán, yán wú bù jìn

say (or tell) all one knows and say (or tell) it without reserve/ speak unreservedly

【执迷不悟】zhí mí bù wù

adhere to one's foolish way without awaking/ persist in one's wrong course/ obstinately stick to a wrong course/ refuse to come to one's senses/ persist in error/ be perverse

【直截了当】zhí jié liǎo dāng

simple and direct/ say without mincing words/ without preliminary remarks/ flat and plain/ straight from the shoulder/ straightforward/ outspoken/

bluntly/ point-blank

【直抒己见】zhí shū jǐ jiàn

talk (or speak out) directly and simply/ state one's view frankly/ be plainspoken

【直言不讳】zhí yán bù huì

speak without reservation/ speak without fear or favour/ make an unflattering remark/ mince no words/ call a spade a spade/ speak bluntly/ talk straight/ be outspoken

【直言贾祸】zhí yán gǔ huò

straight talks invite disaster

【只此一家，别无分店】zhǐ cǐ yī jiā, bié wú fēn diàn

the one and only store, no branch office — have a monopoly

【只见树木，不见森林】zhǐ jiàn shù mù, bù jiàn sēn lín

cannot (or fail to) see the wood for the trees/ see the trees but not the forest

【只可意会，不可言传】zhǐ kě yì huì, bù kě yán chuán  
can be subtly appreciated, but not put into words

【只许州官放火，不许百姓点灯】zhǐ xǔ zhōu guān fàng huǒ, bù xǔ bǎi xìng diǎn dēng

the magistrates were allowed (or free) to burn down houses, while the common people were forbidden even to light lamps/ the magistrate ordered the burn-

ing down of people's houses while forbidding the people so much as to light a lamp/ one may steal a horse while another may not look over the hedge

【只要功夫深，铁杵磨成针】zhǐ yào gōng fū shēn, tiě chǔ mó chéng zhēn

constant grinding can turn an iron rod into a needle — perseverance spells success

【只争朝夕】zhǐ zhēng zhāo xī

seize the day, seize the hour/ seize every minute/ race against time

【纸上谈兵】zhǐ shàng tán bīng

fight only on paper/ a paper plan/ mere paper talk/ be an armchair strategist/ engage in idle theorizing

【纸醉金迷】zhǐ zuì jīn mí

(a life of) luxury and dissipation/ living an extravagant life

【指不胜数】zhǐ bù shèng qǔ

more than can be counted on the fingers — very many/ too numerous to be counted on the fingers/ a great many/ countless/ innumerable

【指鹿为马】zhǐ lù wéi mǎ

call a stag a horse — wilful misrepresentation/ talk black into white

【指日可待】zhǐ rì kě dài

the day is not far off/ can be expected soon/ in the not too distant future/ just round the corner

**【指桑骂槐】**zhǐ sāng mà huái

point at the mulberry and abuse the locust — scold a person indirectly/ revile the locust while pointing to the mulberry/ scold (or abuse) a person by ostensibly pointing to someone else/ point at one and abuse another/ scold one person through another/ make oblique accusations/ veiled abuse

**【指手划脚】**zhǐ shǒu huà jiǎo

make gestures/ point right and left/ pointing and gesticulating/ criticize and gesticulate/ carp and cavil/ find (or pick) fault with/ gesticulate

**【咫尺天涯】**zhǐ chǐ tiān yá

a short distance away, and yet poles apart — see little of each other though living nearby/ physically very near but separated as if by long distances

**【趾高气扬】**zhǐ gāo qì yáng

strut (or swagger) about and give oneself airs/ step high and look proud/ carry (or hold) one's head high/ lift up one's horn/ mount (or ride) the high horse/ put on an elated look/ be above oneself/ be swollen with arrogance/ be bloated with pride/ high and mighty/ head in the clouds

**【至高无上】**zhì gāo wú shàng

most lofty/ crowning/ unrivalled/ paramount/ supreme

**【至理名言】**zhì lǐ míng yán

famous (or celebrated) dictum/ a golden saying/ ax-



iom/ maxim

【至死不变】zhì sǐ bù biàn

will never change even unto death/ constant till death/ changeless

【至死不悟】zhì sǐ bù wù

never repent even unto death/ never repent even at death's door/ incorrigibly stubborn

【志大才疏】zhì dà cái shū

have great ambition but little talent/ have high aspirations but little ability/ hitch one's waggon to a star

【志士仁人】zhì shì rén rén

kind and upright man/ people with lofty ideals/ people who are actuated by high ideals

【志同道合】zhì tóng dào hé

cherish the same ideals and follow the same path/ share the same views/ two minds with but a single thought/ have a common goal/ in the same camp/ of one mind

【治病救人】zhì bìng jiù rén

cure the sickness to save the patient

【治国安民】zhì guó ān mǐn

run the country well and give the people peace and security

【治丝益棼】zhì sī yì fēn

sort out silk threads improperly only to tangle them further — do sth which only makes matters worse/

make confusion worse confounded

【炙手可热】zhì shǒu kě rè

if you stretch out your hand you feel the heat · the supreme arrogance of a person with great power/ burning to the touch

【质疑问难】zhì yí wèn nán

raise doubts and difficult questions for discussion

【栴风沐雨】zhì fēng mù yǔ

be combed by the wind and washed (or bathed) by the rain — travel or work despite wind and rain/ expose oneself to the winds and rains in travel/ travel all the time

【智勇双全】zhì yǒng shuāng quán

good in astuteness and physical prowess/ possession of sagacity and valour/ both intelligent and courageous/ both brave and resourceful/ combine wisdom with courage

【智者千虑，必有一失】zhì zhě qiān lǜ, bì yǒu yī shī

even the wise are not always free from error/ even a wise man sometimes makes a mistake/ the best workman sometimes blunders/ the greatest are sometimes caught napping/ Homer sometimes nods

【置若罔闻】zhì ruò wǎng wén

act as if one had not heard/ turn a deaf ear to/ close (shut, seal or stop) one's ears to/ treat with indifference/ pay no heed to/ take no heed of/ pay it no



attention/ ignore completely

【置身事外】zhì shēn shì wài

stay (keep or remain) aloof from the affair/ keep out of the business/ refuse to be drawn into the matter

【置之不理】zhì zhī bù lǐ

put it on the shelf/ pay no attention to/ pay no regard to/ turn a deaf ear to/ turn a cold shoulder to/ shut (or close) one's eyes to/ pass without remark/ sit idly by/ brush aside/ leave alone/ disregard

【置之度外】zhì zhī dù wài

leave it out of the calculations/ leave sth out of consideration/ give no thought to/ have no regard for/ not take into account/ disregard entirely/ ignore

【置之脑后】zhì zhī nǎo hòu

put it at the back of the brain—disregard it/ put out of mind/ banish from one's mind/ ignore and forget/ consign to oblivion

【置之死地而后快】zhì zhī sǐ dì ér hòu kuài

will be content with nothing less than sb's destruction/ will not be satisfied until one has been destroyed

【中流砥柱】zhōng liú dǐ zhù

a rock in the Yellow River in Henan—unmovable under great stresses/ the solitary rock in a turbulent stream/ the firm (or pillar) rock in midstream/ the chief cornerstone/ a tower (or pillar) of strength/ mainstay

【中庸之道】zhōng yōng zhī dào

the doctrine of the mean/ middle course/ the golden mean

【忠心耿耿】zhōng xīn gěng gěng

most faithful and true/ loyal and devoted/ infinitely loyal/ faithfully and conscientiously/ unswerving loyalty

【忠言逆耳】zhōng yán nǐ ěr

good advice jars on the ear/ sincere reproofs grate on the ear/ faithful words grate upon the ear/ faithful admonitions are unpleasant to hear/ honest advice is unpleasant to the ear/ straight advice is difficult to take

【忠贞不渝】zhōng zhēn bù yú

unswerving in (one's) loyalty/ true to the core/ as true as steel (flint or touch)

【终南捷径】zhōng nán jié jìng

shortcut to high office/ royal road to fame/ shortcut to success

【终身大事】zhōng shēn dà shì

the great affair of a lifetime — marriage/ an important event on one's life (usu. marriage)

【终天之恨】zhōng tiān zhī hèn

lifelong regret (or sorrow)/ eternal remorse (or regret)/ regret forever/ have a secret regret for life

【踵决肘见】zhǒng jué zhǒu xiàn

down at the heels and out at elbow — very poor

【众寡悬殊】zhòng guǒ xuán shū

a great disparity in numerical strength/ not equally matched

【众口难调】zhòng kǒu nán tiáo

it is difficult to cater for all tastes/ it is very difficult to satisfy everyone's desire/ it is difficult to please everyone

【众口铄金】zhòng kǒu shuò jīn

a public clamour can melt metals/ public opinion will fuse metals/ public clamour can confound right and wrong

【众目睽睽】zhòng mù kuí kuí

the eyes of the masses are fixed on sb or sth/ under the watchful eyes of the people/ in the public eye/ in the face of the world

【众目昭彰】zhòng mù zhāo zhāng

everyone sees it clearly/ the masses are sharp-eyed

【众怒难犯】zhòng nù nán fàn

you cannot afford to incur public wrath/ it is difficult to go against the anger of all/ it is dangerous to incur the anger of the masses/ an aroused public is difficult to tackle with/ the anger of a crowd is difficult to oppose

【众叛亲离】zhòng pàn qīn lí

the masses are in rebellion and one's friends are de-

serting/ rebellion by the masses and desertion by one's followers/ be opposed by the masses and deserted by one's followers/ rebellion in its ranks, desertion by its associates/ with its followers in revolt and its close associates deserting/ be utterly isolated/ forsaken by all

【众擎易举】zhòng qíng yì jǔ

with united effort it is easily raised/ what is supported by the people is easily accomplished/ many hands make light work/ if each would sweep before his own door, we should have a clean city (or street)

【众人拾柴火焰高】zhòng rén shí chái huǒ yàn gāo

the fire burns high when everybody adds wood to it/ when everybody adds fuel the flames rise high/ great things may be done by mass effort/ many hands make quick work

【众矢之的】zhòng shǐ zhī dì

the target of public criticism/ under attack on all sides

【众说纷纭,莫衷一是】zhòng shuō fēn yún ,mò zhōng yī shì

there are so many contradictory views that it is difficult to decide which is right/ as opinions vary, no decision can be reached/ as opinions vary, no unanimous conclusion can be drawn

【众所周知】zhòng suǒ zhōu zhī

as everyone knows/ as is known to all/ it is common

knowledge that

【众望所归】zhòng wàng suǒ guī

the people's hope (or confidence) is centered on (one person)/ enjoy popular confidence

【众志成城】zhòng zhì chéng chéng

a united people is like a city defense/ unanimity of purpose is like a fenced city/ unity of will is an impregnable stronghold/ unity (or union) is strength

【种瓜得瓜,种豆得豆】zhòng guā dé guā,zhòng dòu dé dòu

plant melons and get melons, sow beans and get beans—as you sow, so will you reap/ you must reap what you have sown/ reap what one has sown

【周而复始】zhōu ér fù shǐ

go round and begin again/ go round and round/ move in cycles

【粥少僧多】zhōu shǎo sēng duō

the gruel is meagre and the monks are many—not enough to go round

【朱门酒肉臭,路有冻死骨】zhū mén jiǔ ròu xiù,lù yǒu dòng sǐ gǔ

while there comes the reek of wines and meats that rot inside the red-painted doors of the rich, the bones of many poor people who have frozen to death are strewn on the road/ behind these vermillion gates meat and wine go to waste, but along the road are

bones of men who have frozen to death/ while the rich dine and wine, the poor die of cold by the roadside

【诛锄异己】zhū chū yì jǐ

eradicate persons not of one's own party/ wipe out dissenters

【诛求无已】zhū qiú wú yǐ

make incessant, exorbitant demands/ make endless exorbitant demands

【珠联璧合】zhū lián bì hé

strings of pearls and girdles of jade — a perfect pair/ collection of pearls and valuables — excellent composition/ (of two good things) combined together/ a happy combination

【珠圆玉润】zhū yuán yù rùn

round as pearls and smooth as jade — excellent singing or polished writing

【诸如此类】zhū rú cǐ lèi

all are similar to this/ things like that (or this)/ and so on and so forth

【铄积寸累】zhū jī cùn lěi

accumulate little by little/ build up bit by bit

【蛛丝马迹】zhū sī mǎ jī

thread of a spider and trail of a horse — clues; traces

【逐字逐句】zhú zì zhú jù

word by word and sentence by sentence/ word for word/ literally



【主观臆断】zhǔ guān yì duàn

subjective and groundless conclusion

【煮豆燃萁】zhǔ dòu rán qí

burn beanstalks to cook beans — one member of a family injuring another/ boil beans with beanstalks — reference to fight among brothers/ fratricidal strife

【煮鹤焚琴】zhǔ hè fén qín

(reference to a rich vulgarian who) cooked the crane for meat and burned a stringed instrument for fuel — inappreciative of art or beauty

【助桀为虐】zhù jié wéi nüè

helping King Jie (or Zhou) to do evil — adding bad to worse/aid King Jie (or Zhou) in his tyrannical rule/ give support to tyrant/ help a tyrant to do evil/ abet an ill-doer/ hold a candle to the devil/ encourage oppression

【助人为乐】zhù rén wéi lè

take pleasure in helping others

【铸成大错】zhù chéng dà cuò

make a gross error/ make grave mistake (or a permanent mistake)/ put one's foot in it/ commit a howler

【筑室道谋】zhù shì dào móu

ask every passerby how to build one's house — have no idea or plan of one's own and accomplish nothing/ one can never build a house by consulting every passerby

**【抓耳挠腮】** zhuā ěr náo sāi

tweak one's ears and scratch one's cheeks (as a sign of anxiety or delight)/ scratch one's head

**【专横跋扈】** zhuān héng bá hù

imperious and despotic/ ride roughshod over/ despotic/ tyrannical/ presuming

**【专心致志】** zhuān xīn zhì zhì

devote oneself to something whole-heartedly and exclusively/ put one's back (heart, whole heart and soul or life) into sth/ set one's heart (or mind) on (or upon) sth/ be bent on.../ be wholly absorbed in.../ be engrossed in.../ with single-hearted devotion/ with undivided attention

**【转败为胜】** zhuǎn bài wéi shèng

turn a defeat into a victory/ snatch a victory out of defeat/ turn the tables on/ get upsides with

**【转祸为福】** zhuǎn huò wéi fú

turn calamity into blessing

**【转弯抹角】** zhuǎn wān mò jiǎo

turn a corner/ full of twists and turns/ in a round-about way/ in a devious way/ prunes and prism/ beat about the bush/ circumambulate

**【转危为安】** zhuǎn wēi wéi ān

take a turn for the better and be out of danger/ carry over the crisis/ be past danger/ pull through

**【装疯卖傻】** zhuāng fēng mài shǎ

feign madness and act like an idiot/ pretend ignorance/play the fool (or idiot)

【装潢门面】zhuāng huáng mén miàn

put up a front/ maintain an outward show/ keep up appearances/ pretentious

【装聋作哑】zhuāng lóng zuò yǎ

pretend to be deaf and dumb/ pretend to be ignorant of sth/ pretend not to know/ play deaf and dumb

【装模作样】zhuāng mó zhò yàng

make a pretence of/ behave in an affected way/ be affected in one's manners/ indulge in histrionics/ put on an act/ assume airs/ smell of the footlights/ affectation/ attitudinize

【装腔作势】zhuāng qiāng zuò shì

be affected or pretentious/ indulge in histrionics/ give oneself airs/ put on lugs/ strike an attitude/ strike a pose/ make grand gestures/ attitudinize

【壮志凌云】zhuàng zhì líng yún

with soaring determination (or aspirations)

【追本穷源】zhuī běn qióng yuán

trace back to the sources or early beginnings/ trace to its source/ investigate the origins/ go into a matter with thoroughness/ get at the root of the matter

【追根究底】zhuī gēn jiū dǐ

pursue investigation of origin (sources or cause) of event/ get to the bottom of sth/ go into the whys and

wherefores of it/ get down to the rock bottom/ inquire deeply into

【追奔逐北】zhuī bēn zhú běi

pursue a routed army

【惴惴不安】zhuì zhuì bù ān

ill at ease/ be anxious and fearful/ be alarmed and on tenterhooks

【谆谆告诫】zhūn zhūn gào jiè

tirelessly counsel/ admonish repeatedly/ earnestly enjoin

【卓尔不群】zhuō ěr bù qún

standing alone/ outstanding/ preeminent

【卓有成效】zhuō yǒu chéng xiào

very fruitful/ highly effective

【捉襟见肘】zhuō jīn xiàn zhǒu

expose the elbow when fastening one's jacket — very poor/ pull down one's jacket to conceal the raggedness, only to expose one's elbows/ expose one's elbow when drawing tight the lapel of one's jacket/ be in financial difficulty/ have too many difficulties to cope with/ be in straitened circumstances

【茁壮成长】zhuó zhuàng chéng zhǎng

steadily mature/ grow up healthy and strong

【酌情处理】zhuó qíng chǔ lǐ

settle a matter as one sees fit/ act at one's discretion

【斫轮老手】zhuó lún lǎo shǒu

“expert wheelwright”—an old hand

【着手成春】zhuó shǒu chéng chūn

a touch of the hand brings back spring—bring back life to patients (said in praise of a good medical doctor)

【擢发难数】zhuó fà nán shǔ

(of crimes) be too numerous to count (like “pulling out a tuft of hair” and trying to count it)/ be as countless as the hairs on a head/ be innumerable like the hair on the head

【孜孜不倦】zī zī bù juàn

assiduous and never tired/ with astonishing diligence/ with indefatigable zeal/ with assiduity/ industrious (ly)/ tireless (ly)/ assiduous (ly)/ sedulous (ly)/ indefatigably/ painstaking (ly)/ diligent (ly)

【赵赵不前】zī jū bù qián

hesitate to advance/ hesitating whether to go forward or not/ hobble along

【锱铢必较】zī zhū bì jiào

counting cents and pennies/ haggle over every penny/ dispute over every detail

【字里行间】zì lǐ háng jiān

between the lines

【字斟句酌】zì zhēn jù zhuó

choose one's words with great care/ go over the wording carefully/ weigh every word/ refine on (or

upon) the wording

【自暴自弃】zì bào zì qì

be backward and have no urge to make progress/ be resigned to one's backwardness/ give up hope in oneself/ lose self-confidence (or self-respect)/ give oneself up to vice/ throw oneself away/ abandon oneself to despair/ be blind to one's own interests/ self-abandoned/ self-forsaking/ self-degradation

【自不量力】zì bù liàng lì

overestimate one's strength (or oneself)/ not know one's own limitations/ not to take a proper measure of oneself/ overrate oneself/ overreach oneself/ go beyond one's depth/ unaware of one's own impotence/ put a quart into a pint pot/ put one's arm out further than one can draw it back again

【自惭形秽】zì cán xíng huì

ashamed of one's own appearance/ feel unworthy (of others' company)/ have a sense of inferiority or inadequacy/ look small/ feel cheap

【自成一家】zì chéng yī jiā

strike out a new line for oneself—independence/ (in calligraphy, painting, sculpture, etc.) have a style of one's own/ be unique in one's style/ develop one's own style of/ found a new school of

【自吹自擂】zì chuī zì lèi

blow one's own trumpet (or horn)/ crack oneself up/ sing one's own praise/ ring one's own bell/ praise

one's own wares/ brag and boast/ cry roast meat/  
self-advertisement/ brag about/ self-glorification

【自得其乐】zì dé qí lè

take delight in doing something as pleasurable occu-  
pation/ be content with one's lot/ get a kick out of it

【自高自大】zì gāo zì dà

be full of conceit/ be disgustingly self-satisfied/ be  
full of vainglory/ be (or get) above oneself/ be on  
(get on, mount or ride) the high horse/ have an  
overweening opinion of oneself/ go about with one's  
head in the air/ self-important/ self-conceited/ arro-  
gant

【自告奋勇】zì gào fèn yǒng

offer to undertake (a difficult or dangerous task)/  
volunteer (to do sth difficult)/ volunteer for some  
special duty/ volunteer one's services for/ offer to  
take the responsibility upon oneself/ of one's own ac-  
cord/ come forward

【自顾不暇】zì gù bù xiá

unable even to fend for oneself (much less look after  
others)/ be busy enough with one's own affairs/ have  
enough to do to look after oneself/ unable to take  
care of oneself

【自给自足】zì jǐ zì zú

self-contained and self-sufficient/ able to support  
oneself/ self-sufficiency/ self-supporting/ autarkic-  
(al)/ autarky/ autarchy

**【自觉自愿】** zì jué zì yuàn

of one's own free will/ voluntarily/ willingly

**【自掘坟墓】** zì jué fén mù

dig one's own grave/ work for one's own destruction/ bring ruin upon oneself

**【自力更生】** zì lì gēng shēng

rely on oneself/ take fate in one's own hands/ regeneration (or reconstruction) through one's own efforts/ rely (or depend) on one's own efforts (or strength)/ stand on one's own feet/ self-reliance/ self-dependence

**【自卖自夸】** zì mài zì kuā

praise the goods one sells/ indulge in self-glorification/ blow one's own trumpet

**【自鸣得意】** zì míng dé yì

show self-satisfaction/ be very pleased with oneself/ be self-satisfied/ be puffed up with pride/ sing one's own praises/ crow over one's success/ preen oneself/ plume oneself on/ cock-a-hoop/ smug

**【自鸣清高】** zì míng qīng gāo

imagine oneself to be superior to others/ profess to be above politics and worldly considerations

**【自命不凡】** zì mìng bù fán

consider oneself no ordinary being/ think of oneself as a superior being/ pride oneself on being out of the ordinary/ consider oneself above the crowd/ consider oneself an exceptional person/ have an unduly high



opinion of oneself/ think no end of oneself/ think no small beer of oneself/ be well wadded with conceit/ priggish

【自欺欺人】zì qī qī rén

deceive oneself as well as others/ cheat (or deceive) oneself and others/ try to deceive others only to end in deceiving oneself/ sheer hypocrisy/ believe one's own lies/ whip the devil round the stump (or post)/ self-deceiving/ self-deception

【自强不息】zì qiáng bù xī

make unremitting (or unceasing) efforts to improve oneself/ constantly strive to become stronger

【自取灭亡】zì qǔ miè wáng

court (or invite) destruction/ court one's own ruin (or disaster)/ court self-destruction/ bring oneself to ruin/ bring about one's own destruction/ bring destruction on oneself/ seek one's own downfall/ take the road to one's doom/ ride to disaster/ head for disaster/ run towards disaster/ cut one's own throat

【自取其咎】zì qǔ qí jiù

bring blame on oneself/ bring misery upon oneself/ have only oneself to blame/ ask for trouble

【自然而然】zì rán ér rán

naturally/ automatically/ spontaneously/ of oneself

【自认晦气】zì rèn huì qì

accept bad luck without complaint/ admit defeat in good grace/ grin and bear it

**【自生自灭】** zì shēng zì miè

(of a thing) emerge of itself and perish of itself/ run its course

**【自食其果】** zì shí qí guǒ

eat one's own bitter fruit/ be made to pay for one's rabid evil doings/ reap the harvest of one's misdeeds/ reap what one has sown/ stew in one's own juice/ face the consequences of one's action

**【自食其力】** zì shí qí lì

live on one's own toil/ live by one's own labour/ support oneself by one's own labour/ earn one's own living/ self-supporting

**【自食其言】** zì shí qí yán

go back on one's own words/ break one's own promise

**【自始至终】** zì shǐ zhì zhōng

from start to finish/ from beginning to end/ from first to last/ from A to Z

**【自私自利】** zì sī zì lì

selfish/ self-seeking/ self-centred/ egocentricity/ egoistic(al)

**【自讨苦吃】** zì lǎo kǔ chī

do sth which will only cause trouble to oneself/ walk into trouble/ ask for trouble and get it/ seek out hardships

**【自投罗网】** zì tóu luó wǎng

fall into a trap through one's own fault/ be caught in

a net through one's own fault/ hurl oneself willingly into the net/ fall into a trap set for oneself by another/ fall into one's own snare/ bite the hook

【自我吹嘘】zì wǒ chuī xū

boast oneself/ boast smugly/ self-commendation/ self-glorification/ self-advertisement/ self-praise

【自我解嘲】zì wǒ jiě cháo

console oneself with soothing remarks/ pat oneself on the back after one's feelings have been wounded

【自我陶醉】zì wǒ táo zuì

imagine oneself to be better than one really is/ indulge in self-delusion as an escape from reality/ be intoxicated with oneself/ narcissism

【自我作故】zì wǒ zuò gù

be the first to do sth/ originate a method, etc. / not bound by conventionality/ do what others have never done before

【自相残杀】zì xiāng cán shā

(of persons within a group, party, etc.) kill each other/ cause death to one another/ slaughter one another/ mutual annihilation/ cut one another's throats/ internecine

【自相惊扰】zì xiāng jīng rǎo

alarm one's own group, etc. / create disturbance within one's ranks/ raise false alarms

【自相矛盾】zì xiāng máo dùn

contradict oneself/ be incongruous with/ self-contradictory/antilogy

【自信不疑】zì xìn bù yí

have self-confidence/ be sure of oneself

【自行其是】zì xíng qí shì

act as one thinks fit/ go one's own way/ act wilfully

【自寻烦恼】zì xún fán nǎo

worry over for nothing/ bring vexation on oneself/ bring trouble on oneself

【自寻死路】zì xún sǐ lù

bring about one's own destruction/ wilfully take the road to one's doom

【自言自语】zì yán zì yǔ

murmur (or talk) to oneself/ keep on chattering though no one is listening/ make unilateral declaration/ speak to oneself/ think aloud/ soliloquize

【自以为得计】zì yǐ wéi dé jì

be pleased with one's own ruses/ fancy oneself clever/ think oneself a smart fellow/ fancy oneself resourceful

【自以为是】zì yǐ wéi shì

consider oneself always in the right/ regard oneself as infallible/ have a firm belief in one's own opinions/ presumptuously claim infallibility/ opinionatedly believe sth to be correct/ regard oneself as right/ be (or become) cocksure/ self-opinionated/ self-righteous

【自由泛滥】zì yóu fàn làn

open wide the floodgates to/ give free currency to/  
spread unchecked/ have free rein

【自由放任】zì yóu fàng rèn

allowing unrestrained freedom/ unrestrained self-indulgence/ follow one's own inclination/ laissez-faire

【自由自在】zì yóu zì zài

leisurely and carefree/ free and unrestrained

【自圆其说】zì yuán qí shuō

give a satisfactory explanation of what one has said or done/ make one's statement consistent/ justify oneself/ make out a good case/ explain away/ self-justification

【自怨自艾】zì yuàn zì yī

be full of remorse/ repent and redress one's errors/  
be contrite and reform oneself

【自知之明】zì zhī zhī míng

know one's own limitations/ know oneself/ self-knowledge

【自作聪明】zì zuò cōng míng

act on the strength of one's own imagined cleverness/  
think oneself clever/ fancy oneself clever/ pretending to be wise

【自作主张】zì zuò zhǔ zhāng

act on one's own/ decide for oneself

【自作自受】zì zuò zì shòu

suffer the consequences of one's own action/ suffer

for one's own account (or act)/ receive the penalty  
for one's own sins/ as you made your bed, so you  
must lie on it/ reap the whirlwind of one's own sow-  
ing/ as you brew, so you must drink/ fry in one's  
own grease/ have only oneself to thank (for that)/  
self do, self have

【恣行无忌】zì xíng wú jì

act wilfully and unscrupulously/ care for nobody/ act  
(or behave) recklessly

【恣意妄为】zì yì wàng wéi

behave uscrupulously

【总而言之】zǒng ér yán zhī

to put it briefly/ to sum up/ to make a long story  
short/ in a word/ in short/ in brief/ in a nutshell/ at  
any rate/ finally

【总角之交】zǒng jiǎo zhī jiāo

friends from childhood/ childhood friend

【纵横捭阖】zòng héng bǎi hé

manoeuvre among various political groupings

【纵横驰骋】zòng héng chí chěng

(of an army) move about (or advance) freely and  
quickly/ sweep through the length and breadth of/  
manoeuvre freely

【走马看花】zǒu mǎ kàn huā

look at the flowers while riding on horseback — gain a  
superficial understanding through cursory observa-

tion/ view the flowers from on horseback/ snatch a transient glance of/ take only a passing glance/ give a hurried and cursory glance/ take a brief look at

【走投无路】zǒu tóu wú lù

poor and utterly helpless (with no one to turn to)/ be (or land) in an impasse/ be driven (or pushed) to the wall/ come to the end of one's tether/ find oneself cornered/ be driven from pillar to post/ be (or stand) at bay/ have no way out

【足智多谋】zú zhì duō móu

masterly in planning and execution/ wise and full of stratagems/ clever (or wise) and resourceful/ good at finding resources/ (a man) of ingenuity/ shifty

【钻牛角尖】zuān niú jiǎo jiān

take unnecessary pains to study an insignificant or insoluble problem/ split hairs/ get into a dead end (or a blind alley)

【罪不容诛】zuì bù róng zhū

even death cannot excuse his offence/ even death cannot atone for the offence/ an unpardonable offence, for which even death is insufficient/ be guilty of crimes for which even death is insufficient punishment

【罪大恶极】zuì dà è jí

criminal and wicked in the extreme/ be guilty of the most heinous crimes/ guilty of terrible (monstrous or atrocious) crimes/ the enormity of the crime/ flagi-

tious

【罪恶滔天】zuì è tāo tiān

with crimes mounting up to the sky/ be guilty of monstrous crimes

【罪恶昭彰】zuì è zhāo zhāng

flagrant offences (or crimes)/ flagrant

【罪该万死】zuì gāi wàn sǐ

be guilty of a crime for which one deserves to die ten thousand deaths/ be guilty of a crime for which even death cannot atone/ hideous crime deserving the harshest punishment

【罪魁祸首】zuì kuí huò shǒu

chief criminal (culprit or offender)/ arch-criminal/ ringleader

【罪孽深重】zuì niè shēn zhòng

sinful

【罪有应得】zuì yǒu yīng dé

a well-earned punishment/ deserve the punishment

【罪责难逃】zuì zé nán táo

cannot escape the responsibility for the offence/ cannot get away with it

【醉生梦死】zuì shēng mèng sǐ

live as if intoxicated or dreaming/ lead a befuddled life/ live a life of dreams/ lead a happy-go-lucky life

【醉翁之意不在酒】zuì wēng zhī yì bù zài jiǔ

the drinker's heart is not in the cup — have ulterior



motives/ though one professes to be a drinker, he is really not interested in wine

【尊师重道】zūn shī zhòng dào

honour the teacher and respect his teachings

【左道旁门】zuǒ dào páng mén

heretical doctrines (or sect)/ heterodox school (or paths)/ black magic/ heresy/ heterodoxy

【左顾右盼】zuǒ gù yòu pàn

glance left and right/ peep left and right/ look around/ cast one's glances about

【左右逢源】zuǒ yòu féng yuán

be able to achieve success one way or another/ win advantage from both sides/ have one's bread buttered on both sides

【左右开弓】zuǒ yòu kāi gōng

shoot first with one hand, then with the other/ shoot first to one side, then to the other/ use first one hand and then the other in quick succession/ give sb a box on both ears/ hit with both hands/ kick with both feet

【左右为难】zuǒ yòu wéi nán

be on the horns of a dilemma/ (caught) in a dilemma/ in an awkward predicament/ stand at a nonplus/ be in a quandary (about or as to)

【左支右绌】zuǒ zhī yòu chù

not have enough money to cover the expenses/ be unable to cope with a situation/ be in straitened circumstances

**【坐吃山空】** *zuò chī shān kōng*

sit idle and eat, and in time your whole fortune will be used up/ remain at home and “eat away” a whole fortune/ sit at home eating away one's resources

**【坐地分赃】** *zuò dì fēn zāng*

(of a ringleader, criminal, booty harbourer, etc.) take a share of the spoils without participating personally in the robbery/ share plunder — as a receiver of stolen goods/ divide the booty on the spot/ divide spoils among/ share the spoils/ partake with a thief

**【坐观成败】** *zuò guān chéng bài*

wait to see how sth succeeds (which side wins)/ wait to see what will come of another's venture/ sit and watch the results of/ look on coldly/ be a mere on-looker

**【坐井观天】** *zuò jǐng guān tiān*

see (or look at) the sky from the bottom of a well — have (or take) a very narrow view (of things)

**【坐困愁城】** *zuò kùn chóu chéng*

be walled in by one's own worries/ wallow in slough of despond

**【坐立不安】** *zuò lì bù ān*

feel uneasy whether sitting or standing/ lose one's balance and be ill at ease/ be on tenterhooks/ be on the anxious bench (or seat)/ be (or sit) on pins and needles/ be in a fidget/ have ants in one's pants/ like a hen on a hot girdle

**【坐山观虎斗】** zuò shān guān hǔ dòu

sit on top of the mountain to watch the tigers fight—  
watch in safety while others fight, then reap the  
spoils when both sides are exhausted

**【坐失良机】** zuò shī liáng jī

let the chance fly by without moving a finger/ let a  
golden opportunity slip by/ allow an opportunity to  
slip past/ he that will not when he may, when he will  
he shall have nay

**【坐视不救】** zuò shì bù jiù

sit back and watch without going to the rescue/ sit  
idly by without lending a helping hand/ look on with  
folded arms

**【坐收渔利】** zuò shōu yú lì

reap the spoils of victory without lifting a finger/  
profit from others' conflict/ reap third party profit/  
have victory (or an advantage) fall into one's lap/  
play both ends against the middle

**【坐卧不宁】** zuò wò bù níng

be unable to sit down or sleep at ease/ cannot get  
ease either sitting or reclining/ feel restless/ fidget  
about and start at every sound/ be nervous at every  
sound

**【坐享其成】** zuò xiǎng qí chéng

sit idle and enjoy the fruits of others' work/ reap  
where one has not sown/ without striking a blow

**【坐以待斃】** zuò yǐ dài bì

sit still waiting for death/ resign oneself to death/ sit passively for one's end/ wait helplessly for the end/ await one's doom

**【坐以待旦】** zuò yǐ dài dàn

sit and wait for the dawn/ sit up and wait for daybreak/ quietly wait for the day to dawn/ remain awake till daybreak

**【作壁上观】** zuò bì shàng guān

stay behind the breastworks and watch others fight/ sit by and watch/ be an onlooker/ look on with folded arms

**【作恶多端】** zuò è duō duān

up to all kinds of evil/ commit all sorts of wickedness/ guilty of every conceivable atrocity

**【作法自斃】** zuò fǎ zì bì

make a law only to fall foul of it oneself/ get into troubles through schemes established by oneself/ caught by one's own laws or device/ be hoist by (or with) one's own petard/ build a fire under oneself

**【作奸犯科】** zuò jiān fàn kē

violate the law and commit crimes/ commit offences against law and discipline/ commit crimes in violation of the law/ transgress the law

**【作茧自缚】** zuò jiǎn zì fù

spin a cocoon around oneself — get enmeshed in a web of one's own spinning/ tie oneself up with duties

(like a cocoon)/ weave a cocoon and get imprisoned in it/ be caught in one's own trap/ put a halter round one's neck

【作威作福】zuò wēi zuò fú

tyrannically abuse one's power/ act like a tyrant/ ride roughshod over (others)/ lord it over (others)/ sit on the backs of the people/ domineer (over) throw one's weight about

【作贼心虚】zuò zéi xīn xū

a thief has a guilty conscience/ uneasy lies the head of one with a guilty conscience

【座无虚席】zuò wú xū xí

have a full house/ no empty seat/ packed to capacity

【做一天和尚撞一天钟】zuò yī tiān hé shàng zhuàng yī tiān zhōng

go on tolling the bell as long as one is a monk — do the least that is expected of one/ so long as one remains a monk, one goes on tolling the bell/ do what is expected of one as long as one has to/ take a passive attitude towards one's work/ follow a routine